



From Arab Poet
to Muslim Saint

Ibn al-Fārid, His Verse, and His Shrine

Th. Emil Homerin

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His Verse, and His Shrine

Th. Emil Homerin

The American University in Cairo Press
Cairo • New York

**Perhaps your phantom
will visit my bed
in the darkness of dreams.**

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Preface to the Paperback Edition

I am grateful to the American University in Cairo Press for publishing this second edition of *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*. Originally published in 1994, the first edition has been sold out for several years, and so a new edition will continue to address those interested in Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the larger issues of Islamic mysticism and Muslim saints in Egypt. I have taken this opportunity to add a list of addenda and corrections to the first edition, and to provide an additional bibliography of sources, most of which were published after 1994. Finally, in this new preface, I have continued Ibn al-Fāriḍ's story through the year 2000, based largely on my recent research in Cairo. For this, I would like to express my gratitude to the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Research Center in Egypt, and to the members of ARCE's Cairo office, especially director Mark Easton, and Amira Khattab and Amir Hassan. I am also indebted to Raymond Stock for graciously introducing me to Naguib Mahfouz, and to Ken Cuno for our spirited conversations, during which he suggested I approach the AUC Press regarding a second edition of this book. Many other friends, some old and some new, made my family and me welcome in Egypt once again, and in particular I want to thank Hassan 'Khalid' Ibrahim, and Umm 'Umar and her family at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine. As ever in Cairo, John Swanson remains a knowledgeable and generous friend.

At Century's End

Shaykh Gād Salīm Gād was the tireless caretaker of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine for nearly twenty-five years, and his sudden death in 1984 left the shrine and its *mawlid*, or 'saint's day,' in disarray. Both appeared in jeopardy for some years, yet his family and followers carried on. Today, a permanent caretaker, Shaykh Muṣṭafā Ḥanafī, supervises the mosque, whose interior has been refurbished and freshly painted;

older trees have been replaced in the courtyard to maintain the cool shade there. The annual *mawlid* is again a very lively affair and remains under the supervision of the Rifāʿī, Sufi order to which Shaykh Gād belonged. His sons, ʿUmar and Ṭāhā, now grown men with their own families, have a prominent place in the event, as does their mother Umm ʿUmar.

In 2000, the *mawlid* took place over three days, culminating on a Thursday with a procession of the Rifāʿī order and a rousing evening of chant and song performed by Yāsīn al-Tuhāmī, perhaps the most popular Sufi singer in Egypt today. Early in the afternoon, the procession formed at the western end of the neighborhood, on the main street leading up to the shrine. Male members of the Rifāʿī order gathered round as some pierced their cheeks with needles and skewers (*dabbūs*). An elderly man pierced his eyelid, while the youngest member, a ten-year old boy, had his cheeks pierced for the first time. Shaykh Gād's eldest son, ʿUmar, assisted many of the participants by first rubbing the needles and skewers with lemon, and then carefully forcing them through the skin. Finally, he pierced his own cheeks. Then, the pierced devotees formed a long column, with each person holding the shoulder of the man walking before him. They were accompanied by other Rifāʿīs, some of whom carried flags and banners with the name of the order, as others blew whistles, played cymbals and tambourines, or beat drums. A rhythm arose with the chant "*Allāhu-l-ḥayyu*," ('God, the living'), and many began to dance as they slowly moved toward the shrine. One Rifāʿī Sufi appeared to be in charge of a small, rather sluggish snake, which he draped around the neck of the ten-year old boy and others during the procession, including one of two teenaged girls, who had joined their father in the march. At points along the way, the procession stopped and recited, in unison, the Fātiḥah, the opening chapter of the Qurʾān. They were joined in this by the many women, children, and men who lined the street to share in the event.

At sunset, the procession finally arrived and entered the courtyard of Umm ʿUmar's residence adjacent to the shrine, where various members of the procession respectfully greeted her. Then, the needles and skewers were withdrawn and the sunset prayers performed in the mosque shrine containing Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb. Following the prayers and a light meal, the participants gathered together with hundreds of supporters, to listen to Yāsīn al-Tuhāmi sing Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical verse. ʿUmar, Ṭāhā, and a few other Rifāʿī Sufis formed a line on stage behind Yāsīn and swayed to the rhythm of his songs. Below and to one side of the stage, Umm ʿUmar and a group of women formed

their own section, where they enjoyed the performance. Yāsīn sang long into the night, much to the delight of his enamored audience.

Relatives of Umm ʿUmar taped the festivities, and she gladly shows the video to visitors at her home on a VCR purchased by her sons. With their support, Umm ʿUmar has been able to retire and devote her full attention to her younger children, her grandchildren, and the annual celebration of the saint. Once a modest event, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *mawlid* now draws hundreds of participants, along with a number of Arab television stations and reporters. Recently, a French crew has also filmed the *mawlid* for a documentary on the saint and the Sufi path, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as a poet, mystic, and saint, has drawn renewed scholarly attention as well. Though these gains are modest, to be sure, they suggest that after two centuries of decline, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's saintly appeal may once again be ascendant.

Addenda and Corrigenda

Thanks are due to Todd Lawson and Roger Allen for pointing out several of the errors corrected below.

Pages 15–16: The identity of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's student quoted on page 16 is Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Mūsā ibn Yūsuf ibn Musdī al-Azdī (598–663/1202–65), a ḥadīth scholar, poet and litterateur, and author of a work entitled *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, the probable source for this biographical notice. Originally, I had ascribed the passage to al-Mundhirī, who composed a work under the same title (see page 101, note 3). Later, I found a portion of Ibn Musdī's account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ cited by Ibrāhīm al-Biqāʿī in his *Tanbīh al-ghabī*, edited and published in *Maṣraʿ al-taṣawwuf* by ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Wakīl (Cairo, 1953), 138. For more on Ibn Musdī, see ʿUmar al-Kaḥḥālāh, *Muʿjam al-muʿallifīn* (Damascus: al-Maktabah al-ʿArabiyah, 1957), 12:140, and Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, edited by Sven Dederling, et al. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1959–), 5:254–55.

Page 16: The published edition of Ibn Musdī's account of the poet, noted above, gives the preferred reading *taṣarruf* ('He decided to undertake') in place of *taṭarruf* ('He pushed to the limits'). The latter reading may be found in ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Fayyūmī, *Nathr al-jumān fī tarājim al-aʿyān*, Cairo: Arab League Manuscript Institute, microfilm 428 (Taʾrikh) of ms 1746, Istanbul: Maktabat Aḥmad al-Thālith, 70b.

Pages 65–66, 74, 122, n. 80: al-Matbūlī for al-Matbulī.

- Page 74: Ibn al-Qaṭṭān for Ibn al-Oaṭṭān.
 Page 91, 94: Yāsīn al-Tuhāmī for Yā Sīn al-Tuhāmai
 Page 113, n. 53: *Shadharāt* 5:399–400 for *Shadharāt* 5:500.
 Page 113, n. 55: Qurʾān 12:44 for Qurʾān 22:44.
 Page 139: Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī for Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī.
 Page 144: Al-Kāshānī's *Kashf* is MS 4106(3979), not (3879).
 Page 147, 158: Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazzālī for Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazzālī.
 Page 153: Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Bāqī Surūn for Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Bāqī Surūn.
 Page 155: Ṭāhā al-Hājirī for Ṭāhā al-Hājirī.
 Page 161: al-Qūnawī for al-Qunawī.

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Preface

This work is about the sanctification of the renowned Arab mystical poet ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (576–632/1181–1235). It charts and analyzes the course of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s posthumous manifestations over seven and a half centuries to present a case study of saint and shrine formation in classical Islam and, particularly, in Mamluk Egypt. Further, this study gauges the weight of religious belief within specific historical, social, political, and economic contexts in order to evaluate Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s rising reputation as a saint in the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries and his decline over the last hundred years. Through the systematic study of a premodern and, now, modern saint this work aims to deepen our understanding of a neglected dimension of Islam and to contribute to the broader study of saints and sainthood within the field of religion.

As will become apparent, the many and changing views of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his verse have often stood at the center of a complex network of competing modes of authority and interpretation, including the poetic and prophetic, the ecstatic and theosophical, the institutional and political. A major theme of this work, then, is about the different ways in which people read—how some have read poetry and other writings, other people and events—and how such readings may influence and be influenced by religion and literature.

Though this work is based largely on sources unused by previous scholars of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, I remain indebted to the pioneering work on the poet by R. A. Nicholson, C. A. Nallino, and M. M. Hilmī. I am also indebted to a number of institutions, colleagues, and friends who have aided my research. I wish to thank, in Egypt, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Dār al-Wathā’iq, the Arab League Manuscript Institute, the American Research Center, the Netherlands Research Institute, and the very kind and knowledgeable Arabist Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Majīd Harīdī.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Fulbright Foundation and to the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation for their generous support; to

the following additions: the hamzah (ʾ) is a glottal stop; the ʿayn (ʿ) is produced by “swallowing” the vowel immediately preceding or following it (e.g., *ʿIrāq*, *maʿārif*, *ʿUmar*); *kh* approximates the *ch* of *loch* or *Bach*; *h* resembles a breathy, whispered *ha*! Finally, there are four velarized, or “emphatic,” consonants: *ṣ*, *ḍ*, *ṭ*, *ẓ*; they give a “darker” quality to the surrounding vowels (e.g., Arabic *ṣ* is pronounced like the English *sad*, while *ṣ* approximates *sod*). The emphatics are of importance to this study since the poet/saint’s name is Ibn al-Fāriḍ; the emphatic *ḍ* gives the *ā* the sound of a prolonged *a* as in *father*.

Time, Place, and Pronunciation

Dates and the Glossary

Because many important classical Arabic sources are arranged according to Islamic “Hijrī” dates, all dates prior to the twentieth century are given in the Islamic years followed by their “common era” equivalents (e.g., A.H. 1–7/622–29 C.E.).

The purpose of the glossary is twofold: to give succinct definitions of technical terms, place names, and concepts that are unfamiliar to most nonspecialists (e.g., *walī*, *Fuṣṭāṭ*, monism) and to offer a brief overview of important periods in Muslim Egyptian history (i.e., Ayyubids, Mamluks, and Ottomans).

Transliteration

My transliteration of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish in Latin characters follows the system used for these languages by the Library of Congress, with the following exceptions: (1) well-known names and terms are cited in their common English forms (e.g., Naguib Mahfouz for Najīb Maḥfūz, Cairo for al-Qāhirah), and (2) titles of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish works beginning with the definite article are consistently cited with the article whether or not they are preceded by the English *the* or a possessive pronoun (e.g., the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, not the *Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*); this should minimize confusion regarding a work’s proper title.

Pronunciation

There are three short Arabic vowels: (1) *a* as in *bat*, (2) *i* as in *bit*, (3) *u* as in *put*. Usually, long vowels are lengthened short vowels. There are two Arabic diphthongs: (1) *ay* as in the *i* of *bite*, and (2) *aw* as in *cow*. The majority of Arabic consonants sound like their English counterparts, with

Bruce Craig of Regenstein Library, University of Chicago; and to the Firestone Library, Princeton University, for obtaining additional source materials important to my research. Finally, I particularly appreciate the comments and criticism from friends and colleagues who have read or discussed parts of this work with me: Daniel Beaumont, Douglas Brooks, Frederick De Jong, Shaun Marmon, Rudolph Peters, Carl Petry, Helga Rebhan and, especially, William Cleveland, William Scott Green, Michael Sells, Ruth Tonner, and Nora Walter. Finally, I extend thanks to the members of my dissertation committee—Robert Dankoff, Heshmet Moayyad, the late Fazlur Rahman, and Jaroslav Stetkevych—for their patience and encouragement.

I dedicate this book to my family, my friends, and most affectionately to Floyd A. Homerin, my father, and Miriam J. Homerin, my recently departed mother.

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to Muslim Saint

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Introduction

In 875/1470 ‘Alī ibn Khāṣṣ Bāy, the father-in-law of the sultan Qā’it Bāy, was riding toward Cairo’s Qarāfah cemetery when he saw before him a man of fine bearing. As ‘Alī pulled up on his horse’s reins, a second man of awesome appearance approached the first man, and the two conversed. The second man left, so ‘Alī asked the first:

“Who was that man?”

“Don’t you know him?”

“No.”

“Don’t you know him?”

“No.”

“You don’t know him?”

“No!”

“That was ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ! Everyday he rises up from this place, seeking God’s protection from those who speak ill of him!”

The man left, and ‘Alī did not know from where he had come, but God knows best.¹

This miraculous appearance of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s ghost two centuries after his death attested to his sainthood in political as well as religious terms. For the incident involved an important relative of Egypt’s Muslim ruler, and it gave an ominous warning to Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s opponents, who had stirred up a controversy threatening a new sultan’s power. As we shall see, their failure to convict the poet of heresy would not only end their careers but would also insure Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s saintly reputation.

At issue in the dispute was not the existence of sainthood but, rather, the criteria for sanctification. Lacking an ecclesiastical hierarchy like that of the Catholic church, Islam never developed a formal means of canonization, and debate has raged over who is or is not a saint. At stake have

been the accepted models of appropriate social behavior and personal piety and, as important, the very basis of religious authority, since those closest to God can act on His behalf. Thus, the saints have remained a nagging problem for Muslim conservatives who would establish, once and for all, God's final laws for society.

Yet the saints could not be denied; they are mentioned in the Qur'ān. While the Qur'ān does not articulate a doctrine of sainthood, the word most commonly used in later Arabic to refer to a saint, *walī* (pl. *awliyā'*), is found in numerous Qur'ānic verses, such as 2:257:

God is the *walī* of those who believe; He takes them from darkness into light!

And 10:62:

The *walīs* of God! They have no fear nor do they grieve!

In these and similar instances, *walī* is best translated as "protector," "protected friend," or "ally." In seventh-century Arabia a *walī* was a patron or guardian who was required to treat his wards, allies, and other clients (*mawālī*) as if they were blood relatives, to the extent of taking blood vengeance on their behalf (= *walī al-dam*, "avenger"). What the Qur'ān asserts in such verses, then, is that God protects His special friends whom He will redeem in this world and the next. In a famous tradition God declares:²

Whoever treats a *walī* of mine as an enemy, on him I declare war!

As a later seventeenth-century Muslim scholar explained, God and his saints were like a great king and his companions. An insult to the king's favorites could result in political disaster; insolence toward the saints invited eternal doom.³

Saints and Sufis

While the Qur'ān explicitly states that all God-fearing Muslims are His *walīs*, or protected friends (7:34), by the ninth century *walī* had become a special title for those select Muslims believed to possess God-given spiritual power (*barakah*), which was verified by their ability to perform miracles (*karāmāt*). Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, was essential to this elaboration of the term.

Like most branches of Muslim religious knowledge and practice, Sufism has its roots in the Qur'ān and the traditions of Muhammad (*ḥadīth*). Muslim tradition abounds with accounts of Muhammad's ascetic life-style and spiritual experiences, and the Qur'ān contains numerous passages that declare God's vital presence in His creation:

Wherever you turn, there is the face of God! (2:115)

If My servants inquire of you concerning Me, lo, I am near!
(2:186)

We are nearer to [the human being] than his jugular vein!
(50:16)

And, above all, there is the haunting "Light Verse" (24:35):

God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The semblance of His light is like a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp in a glass. The glass is like a shining star lit from a blessed tree, an olive, of neither east nor west, whose oil would seem to shine even if not touched by fire. Light upon light, God guides to His light whom He wills, and God strikes parables for humanity, for God knows everything!

Such passages were inspirational to individuals inclined toward reflection. In addition, the sensuality and civil unrest within the expanding Islamic empire of the seventh and eighth centuries reinforced ascetic trends among the pious of the community. As Islam became progressively codified over the next several centuries, religious thinkers inevitably became specialized as exegetes, *ḥadīth* experts, legal authorities, theologians, and, also, mystics. Parallel to other areas of scholarship such as jurisprudence and theology, Sufism developed into a more formalized discipline as Sufis sought to clarify their experiences and views and to map out spiritual itineraries to bring believers closer to God. By the thirteenth century organized Sufi orders (*ṭarīqah* [pl. *ṭuruq*]) had thousands of members from virtually all segments of society.⁴

A number of Muslim scholars, many with mystical proclivities, such as al-Kalābādhī (d. 385/995) and al-Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111), attempted to give some order to the increasingly specialized divisions of Islamic scholarship by linking each discipline to others within a larger and comprehensive whole. Given a prominent place in many of these systems were the devout, charismatic Muslims—often Sufis—believed to have been favored by God. Various grades and ranks were erected for the saintly folk of each

generation, and, though they were subordinate to the sinless prophets, these pious saints were appropriate subjects for emulation and, more often, favored objects of veneration, mediators of divine grace. For most Muslims, including the religious elite, saints had become an accepted fact of life.⁵

Yet the criteria and process for their sanctification remain obscure. It is understandable that relatives of the prophet Muhammad came to be venerated. Muhammad's daughter Fāṭimah, her husband 'Alī—who was also Muhammad's cousin and a caliph—and al-Ḥusayn, 'Alī and Fāṭimah's martyred son, have had a special place in Islam for centuries. Similarly, other martyrs, and the insane too, have been numbered among the saints of many religious traditions. The situation, however, is not so clear for many other Muslim saints, and thus I have tried to set some markers in this largely unexplored territory through a detailed study of a single saint and his fortunes over the centuries.

'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ is an ideal subject for such an analysis. Regarded as a saint within a generation of his death, Ibn al-Fāriḍ continues to be venerated at his shrine in Cairo. We can follow his path from poet to saint over a 750-year trail of extant sources—including biographies, hagiographies, polemics, legal rulings, histories, and travel accounts—which allow us to see Ibn al-Fāriḍ from contrasting perspectives.

Because he was considered by many to be the greatest poet of his day, a few individuals visited his grave shortly after his death. But soon this grave became the goal of pilgrims who sought blessings from sacred sites. Stories of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's reported miracles began to circulate, and his position as a holy man was elaborated and standardized by his grandson and later admirers, while his tomb evolved from a humble grave of religious importance to an established center of economic and political consequence. In the late fifteenth century Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb and poetry became crucial points of contention between opposing factions of Cairo's religious leadership, and the resolution of the controversy in the poet's favor firmly established him among Egypt's saints. His shrine continued to prosper under Ottoman rule as it became a house of worship for Muslims of all social strata. While support slackened beginning in the eighteenth century, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine and saintly reputation have endured to administer to the needs of the poor and desperate.

Laylā's Fire

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's sanctity is tied directly to his beautiful religious poetry, which has been admired even by those who opposed his sainthood. Although the amount of verse preserved in his *Diwān* is modest when

compared to collections by his contemporaries, Ibn al-Fāriḍ has won lasting fame for two poems: his wine-ode, the *al-Khamrīyah*, and the massive *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, or "Greater Poem Rhyming in 'T.'" In these and other poems Ibn al-Fāriḍ reinterpreted classical themes—whether the love of women or of wine—to intimate a Sufi view of life which he shared with many of his contemporaries.⁶

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's skill in using the Arab poetic tradition for such religious ends is readily apparent in his shorter formal odes. The classical ode (*qaṣīdah*) normally begins in an elegiac mood, as the poet expresses feelings of grief and loss amid the ruined campsite abandoned by his former lover. Often the poet recalls the days of blissful union with her, but he leaves this past and the ruins to cross the blazing desert on his sturdy she-camel. The tone of the poem then turns heroic as the poet completes his quest and arrives at his tribe or patron, whom he praises.⁷

Ibn al-Fāriḍ added further nuance to these classical themes and topoi through wordplay and other rhetorical devices that made reference to the Qurʾān and well-known Islamic beliefs and practices. This should remind us that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was a consummate poet, and we must grasp some of the beauty of his poetry, its moods, meanings, and spiritual import, to appreciate Ibn al-Fāriḍ's honored place among his contemporaries and among later generations, who spoke of other mystical poets as composing "in the way of Ibn al-Fāriḍ."⁸

- (1) Did Laylā's fire shine
at Dhū Salam
or did lightning flash
at al-Zawrāʾ and al-ʿAlam?
- (2) Oh breezes of Naʿmān,
where is dawn's breath?
Oh water of Wajrah,
where is my first draught?
- (3) Oh driver of the howdahs
rolling up the perilous deserts
aimlessly like a scroll,
at Dhāt al-Shīḥ of Iḍam
- (4) Turn aside at the sacred precinct—
May God preserve you!—
seeking the *ḡāl* thicket
possessing sweet bay and lavender,
- (5) And halt at Salʿ and say to the valley:
"Were those dear tamarisks

at al-Raḡmatān
watered by flowing rains?"

- (6) I adjure you by God!
if you cross al-‘Aqīq
at forenoon,
greet them boldly
- (7) And say: "I left him stricken,
lying in your encampments,
living like the dead,
sickness infecting disease!"
- (8) My heart is flaming
like a torch,
my eyes awash
in endless torrents.
- (9) This is the lovers' law:
bound to a fawn
every limb
is racked with pain.
- (10) Fool
blaming me for loving them,
enough!
Could you love, you wouldn't blame.
- (11) By sacred union
and noble love,
and by the steadfast covenant
of pre-eternity,
- (12) I have not broken from them
seeking solace
or another;
I'm not like that.
- (13) Return sleep to my eyes—
perhaps your phantom
will visit my bed
in the darkness of dreams.
- (14) Ah, for our days
at al-Khayf—
had they been ten—
but how could they last?

- (15) If only grief
 could cure me,
 and remorse recover
 what has passed.
- (16) Fawns of the winding valleys,
 leave me alone—please.
 I have bound my eye
 to face only them,
- (17) Obeying a judge
 who decreed a wondrous thing:
 the shedding of my blood
 in unhallowed and sacred grounds.
- (18) Deaf—he did not hear the plea—
 dumb—he did not answer—
 blind to the case
 of one bound by desire.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ begins this ode by recollecting his lost love, whom he calls Laylā. Within the Arabic tradition the most celebrated Laylā was the beloved of the legendary eighth-century poet-lover Majnūn, who perished from unrequited love. The appearance of her name in the first verse signals the poem's recurring themes of love and separation. Further, Laylā is a homonym of the Arabic word *laylah*, meaning "night," the time of the opening scene. There the poet is uncertain if the distant light he saw was that of a campfire or a flash of lightning, suggesting his anxious and confused state. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's references to fire, air, water, and his use of winds, *arwāḥ*—also meaning "spirits"—imply that his entire being is in need of immediate relief (vv. 1–2).

The poet's condition is desperate, and his description of the camel driver rolling up the deserts "like a scroll (*sijill*)" brings to mind the Qur'ānic deed sheets, or the Book of Life, which is closed at death (21:104). The poet then envisions the caravan as it proceeds to the environs of a sacred precinct at Medina, the city of the prophet Muhammad and a recommended stop for pilgrims, which is situated in the valley of Iḍām with the hill known as Saī' and the valleys of al-Raqmatān and al-ʿAqīq nearby.

The poet recalls a *ḍāl* thicket teeming with sweet bay and lavender located within the sacred precinct. The *ḍāl* trees and fragrant foliage are recurrent features in the Arab poetic landscape, which invariably resonates with memories of the beloved. But this paradisiacal garden may also be a place of wondrous encounter, for a *ḍāl* is a lote tree and so synonymous with the *sidrah*, the lote tree that served as the locus of divine revelation during Muhammad's visionary night journey referred to in 53:13–16 of the Qur'ān:

[Muhammad] saw [the agent of revelation] descend again near the furthest lote tree where the Garden of the Abode is, when there enveloped the lote tree what enveloped it!

The poet longs to return to the Muslim holy land, and his message to his beloved in verses 8–9 presents him as the archetypal lover standing dazed among the ruins of her abandoned camp. Like Majnūn, the poet may move among the living, but he is dead to all self-will. His lovesickness is the very essence of all disease; his eyes are full of tears. His heart is so inflamed by passion that it could serve as a torch (*qabas*), an allusion to Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush, as told in the Qur'ān (27:7–10). A possible reference to another prophet may be found in verse 9 of the poem:

This is the lovers' law [*sunnah*]
bound to a fawn
every limb
is racked with pain.

Within Islam accounts of Muhammad's sayings and actions—his *sunnah*, or "custom"—were collected and codified in *ḥadīth*, and these traditions are second only to the Qur'ān as a source for religious practice and law. But in the poet's case the lovers' custom is king, and so he must be consumed totally by love. The poet rejects those who blame him for this passionate love (v. 10), and then, in verse 11, he rises to the poem's climax as he swears by the holy union of pre-eternity and the covenant (*al-ʿahd al-wathīq* = *al-mīthāq*) made there between God and all of humanity. Here we find an allusion to Qur'ān 7:172:

And when your Lord drew from the loins of the children of Adam their progeny and made them bear witness against themselves: "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Indeed! We so witness!" Lest they say on the Resurrection Day, "Indeed, we were unaware of this [fact]!"

This Qur'ānic passage attests to humanity's eternal dependence on and servitude to God, and so Ibn al-Fāriḍ swears that he has remained a true servant, taking no substitute for his beloved (vv. 11–12). Then, calling upon an ancient image, the poet prays that the beloved's phantom might visit him while he sleeps; though apart, lovers may still be united, if only in a dream (v. 13).

But the poet's humbled and very human condition tempers such an

expectation as he longs for the joyous days spent with the beloved at al-Khayf mentioned in verse 14. Al-Khayf is the name of the famous mosque located at Minā near Mecca, where Muslims festively pass their last three days of the pilgrimage, hence Ibn al-Fāriḍ's wish to prolong the days. Though Ibn al-Fāriḍ devotedly recalls this most precious memory of his beloved, undistracted by beautiful fawnlike women, the powerful feelings that he experienced during his pilgrimage encounter fade (vv. 15–16). Life remains hard and seemingly capricious, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ concludes his poem with a portrayal of fate or love—and, possibly, God—as an insensitive judge who has decreed every person's death; lord over all things, he need not be concerned with his servants until Judgment Day (vv. 17–18).

The pilgrimage to Mecca is a pivotal theme in this and other poems by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as he recalls some of the pilgrims' rites and rituals and several stopping places along the way. To a degree these references reflect the poet's personal experience of the pilgrimage, which he made several times. Yet the pilgrimage had long served Arabic love poetry as a licit meeting place for men and women, which concealed the illicit love affair between the poet and his mistress. In contrast, religious literature often has viewed the pilgrimage as the closest earthly experience to an encounter with God, and this together with Ibn al-Fāriḍ's several allusions to meetings between the human and the divine within the poem (vv. 4, 8, and, especially, 11) leave a strong impression that his beloved Laylā may, in fact, be a symbol for God.⁹

Ibn al-Fāriḍ performs his poetic pilgrimage in memory, and, from a Sufi perspective, he makes an inward journey to witness the divine in the Ka'bah of the human heart, to recollect and reaffirm the *mīthāq*, the primordial covenant between God and humanity referred to in verse 11. For many Muslims this original meeting with God accounts for humanity's innate knowledge of His oneness and their love of Him. This longing for God is a subliminal one, however, since most people have forgotten their pre-eternal pledge following the disobedience of Adam and Eve and their eviction from the garden. As a result, humanity struggles with the test of creation; individuals must resist the temptations of this world and of Satan and willingly submit to God, if they are ever to see Him again in paradise. To assist in these endeavors God has sent prophets to remind humanity of their neglected covenant. Thus, *dhikr*, "remembrance," by believers is essential to religious life, and the Qur'ān frequently exhorts humanity to remember God and His blessings: "If you remember Me, I remember you" (*fa-dhkurūnī adhkurkum* [2:152]).

Of course, all Muslims are to recollect God during their five daily prayers and other required religious acts. But many devout believers have

undertaken additional practices in order to discipline their selfish thoughts and desires. According to a popular tradition, God will reward such pious behavior with a state of mystical union:¹⁰

My servant continues to draw near to Me through supererogatory acts until I love him, and when I love him, I become his ear with which he hears, I become his eye with which he sees. . . .

Among the oldest Sufi devotional exercises is meditation on a passage of the Qur'ān or a tradition of the prophet Muhammad in hopes that a hidden mystical significance will come to light. Such a practice may underlie many of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Qur'ānic references and his allusions to the prophet Muhammad, as in the following verse:¹¹

adīr dhikra man aḥwā wa-law bi-malāmī
fa-inna aḥādītha-l-ḥabībī mudāmī

Pass round remembrance of the one I love—
though that be to blame me—
for tales of the beloved
are my wine.

Aḥādītha-l-ḥabībī, “tales of the beloved,” makes an obvious allusion to Muhammad, *ḥabīb Allāh*, the “beloved of God,” whose traditions (*aḥādīth*) have been a constant source of inspiration to generations of Muslims.¹² But, as important, this verse also contains the key term *dhikr*—“memory,” “remembrance.” This word and others related to it occur throughout Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse drawing attention to the poet's recollection of the past, both personal and collective, and his reflections on present and future existence. In this sense Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse is a poetry of meditation, sharing much in common with pre-Islamic and classical Arabic poetry. There are, however, several indications within Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse that his remembrance, his *dhikr*, possessed a distinctly mystical component.¹³

From an early period Sufis developed a number of methods for the remembrance of God, which usually involved the frequent repetition of one of the “divine names”—often Allah—or an established religious formula. Such practices came to be known as *dhikr*, and their aim has been both to praise God and to purify the worshipper's heart of anything other than the divine beloved. In fact, several early Sufi authorities asserted that *dhikr*, properly performed, returns the mystic to the day of

the primordial covenant, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ may allude to such a belief in the opening verse of his *al-Khamrīyah*:¹⁴

*sharibnā 'alā dhikri-l-ḥabibi mudāmata
sakirnā bihā min qabli an yukhlāq-l-karmu*

We drank in memory of the beloved
a wine—
we were drunk with it
before creation of the vine.

In this celebrated wine-ode Ibn al-Fāriḍ praises a wine in existence before creation. Clearly, then, the first intoxication occurs in pre-eternity, where humanity bore witness before God. But Ibn al-Fāriḍ goes on to tell us that this blissful state is now lost, while the beloved is veiled by creation. None of the miraculous wine is left to drink; only its fragrance lingers. But this is enough for those who seek it; even its mention (*dhukirat* [v. 6]) will intoxicate the spiritually sensitive while arousing others who have forgotten its very existence.

Although numerous commentaries have expounded on the poem's possible mystical meanings, several medieval commentators have focused specifically on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's use within the ode of terms relating to *dhikr*, and so they have offered intriguing interpretations. Since the primordial covenant bears witness to God's unity, these commentators have read the *al-Khamrīyah* as an account of the spiritual effects resulting from the controlled repetition of the first portion of the Muslim profession of faith "*lā ilāh illā Allāh*" (There is no god but God!)¹⁵

Whatever its merits, such a reading of the *al-Khamrīyah* draws attention to the recurrence of *dhikr* in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry, and the importance of this practice to the poet is evident in his Sufi classic, the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā*. This ode, also known as the *Naẓm al-sulūk* (The Poem of the Way), is an exposition of Sufi thought and doctrine spanning 761 verses. The first 163 verses of the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* could stand alone as one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's love poems. Using classical wine and love imagery, the poet recollects his prior intoxicating union with his beloved and his present sorry state in separation from her; though near unto death, he remains ever faithful to their covenant and his cherished memories of their previous encounter. Again, Ibn al-Fāriḍ adds a mystical dimension to his love poetry by making distinct references to the primordial covenant and the pilgrimage combined with his consistent use of technical language derived from Islamic mysticism, law, and theology.

Then, abruptly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ informs his audience that it is time to explain himself. The approximately six hundred verses that follow are a

wide-ranging discourse on the Sufi path, as the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* takes the form of a guide to the perplexed. The poet advises the sincere seeker on a variety of topics, including selfless love, spiritual intoxication, and mystical union. He also points out the religious significance underlying many of his poetic themes and images. In what would later become one of the more controversial passages of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, Ibn al-Fāriḍ declares that his references to love, lovers, and beloveds—such as Laylā—allude to the revelation of the divine to itself through creation and, in this case, specifically via the poet-lover (vv. 261–63):¹⁶

Every brave of love
am I and she
the beloved of every brave—
all names of a disguise,

Names which named me truly
as I appeared
to myself by a self
that was hidden.

I was still her,
and she still me;
no separation—
one essence in love.

Not surprisingly, *dhikr* has a special place in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's itinerary for mystical union, particularly in the form of the Sufi *samāʿ*. Over the centuries Sufis have gathered together to perform their *dhikr* as part of a larger ceremony called *samāʿ*, an "audition" in which selections from the Qurʾān and poetry provide material for group meditation and dance. In one of the most moving passages of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* Ibn al-Fāriḍ explains that during such sessions the attuned seeker may "recollect" his past union with God in pre-eternity and, perhaps, momentarily secure a taste of future bliss. This is possible, says Ibn al-Fāriḍ, because the session stirs up forgotten memories, which send the entranced mystic into an ecstatic dance. All humans possess these inborn memories, even as infants (vv. 431–41):¹⁷

When the infant moans
from the tight swaddling wrap,
and restlessly yearns
for relief from distress,

He is soothed by lullabies and lays aside
the burden that covered him—

he listens silently
to one who soothes him.

The sweet speech makes him
forget his bitter state
and remember [*yudhkiru*] a secret whisper
of ancient ages.

His state makes clear
the state of audition
and confirms the dance
to be free of error.

For when he burns with desire
from lullabies,
anxious to fly
to his first abodes,

He is calmed
by his rocking cradle
as his nurse's hands
gently sway it.

I have found in gripping rapture—
when she is recalled [*dhikrihā*]
in the chanter's tones
and the singer's tunes—

What a suffering man feels
when he gives up his soul,
when death's messengers
come to take him.

One finding pain
in being driven asunder
is like one pained in rapture
yearning for friends.

The soul pitied the body
where it first appeared,
and my spirit rose
to its high beginnings,

And my spirit soared past
the gate beyond my union
where there is no veil
of communion.

This lyrical account of the power of *dhikr* and meditative trance is yet another example of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's highly charged and emotive poetic

language. His verse had an immediate impact on his students and, later, on generations of poets and litterateurs who admired Ibn al-Fāriḍ's aesthetic sensitivity, his style and ingenuity when composing poetry on love or wine, and his poetic innovation in Sufi verse.

It was, however, this mystical poetry, particularly the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, which became the primary focus for the majority of his later admirers. While the poet's views on *dhikr* and other Sufi topics were not new and were, in fact, rather traditional, his expression of them was both original and highly nuanced, lending itself to a wide range of interpretations. Many even went so far as to regard his verse as flowing from divine ecstasy, and this view is reflected in the numerous accounts of how Ibn al-Fāriḍ fell into a trance upon hearing a verse and in the many stories of how his poetry did the same to others.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical concerns and the intricate beauty of his refined poetry have inspired many Muslims in their own meditations, whether in commentaries on the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* and *al-Khamrīyah* or in *samāʿ* sessions, during which the recitation of his poems became a featured event. For them this intoxicating verse was a miracle, a blessing granted by God to one of His special friends. Yet to others Ibn al-Fāriḍ's elegant poetry was laced with heresy, seducing those who heard it, robbing them of reason. In the opinion of this contentious and powerful minority Ibn al-Fāriḍ was not a saint, not even a good Muslim, but, instead, an infidel poet whose verse was as forbidden as wine itself.

Metamorphosis

Students Remember

Our earliest references to Ibn al-Fāriḍ are two by his student, the famous *ḥadīth* scholar, Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī (581–656/1185–1258):¹

On the second of Jumādā I [632/1235] in Cairo, died the shaykh, the superior litterateur, Abū al-Qāsim ‘Umar ibn al-Shaykh Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī ibn al-Murshid ibn ‘Alī, of Hama by origin, Egyptian by birth and residence, a Shāfi‘ī, known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ. He was buried the next day at the foot of Mt. Muqaṭṭam under al-‘Āriḍ. He heard [*ḥadīth*] from al-Hāfiẓ Abū Muhammad al-Qāsim ibn ‘Alī of Damascus. He spoke excellent poetry in accordance with the way of Islamic mysticism [*‘alā ṭarīqat al-taṣawwuf*] and other than that. He related *ḥadīth*. I heard something of his poetry from him.

I asked him about his birthday, and he said, “The end of the fourth of Dhū al-Qa‘dah in the year seventy-six”—meaning 576 [1181]—“in Cairo.” In his poetry, he would combine purity of expression with sweetness, and he composed a lot of it.

According to this obituary notice, Ibn al-Fāriḍ was born in 576/1181 in Egypt, where he resided. He died in 632/1235 and was buried in Cairo’s Qarāfah cemetery near Mt. Muqaṭṭam. His family was from Hama in Syria. He belonged to the Shāfi‘ī law school and had studied *ḥadīth* with the noted scholar al-Qāsim ibn ‘Alī Ibn ‘Asākir (527–600/1132–1203).² Ibn al-Fāriḍ later taught *ḥadīth* and his own poetry, which al-Mundhirī had studied. Al-Mundhirī further noted that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had composed fine mystical and nonmystical verse.

To this account of the poet al-Mundhirī added the following in a biographical dictionary of his teachers:³

His father was a women's advocate [*fāriḍ*] before the judge of Egypt; he was among the people of religious knowledge and scholarship. He gave his son Abū al-Qāsim a broad education in belles lettres [*adab*]. [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] was of gentle nature, a sweet pool and spring, of pure Arabic in expression, refined of allusion, fluent and sublime in pronunciation and quotation. He pushed to the limits [*taṭarruf*] and then studied Sufism. So he became like a variegated meadow, perfumed by beauty, clad with good nature, gathering from the generosity of the self all varieties [of good things]. He lived in Mecca and then returned to his country [of Egypt] and took up residence in the Azhar congregational mosque. He heard [*ḥadīth*] from Abū [Muhammad] al-Qāsim ibn 'Alī al-'Asākiri and others, and he taught *ḥadīth*. I heard something of that and some of his poetry.

Al-Mundhirī mentioned in this excerpt that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father was a women's advocate at court, a *fāriḍ*, hence the poet's name Ibn al-Fāriḍ, "son of the women's advocate." His father's profession required a religious education, and he was numbered among the religious scholars of his day. Al-Mundhirī specifically mentioned Ibn al-Fāriḍ's literary education in addition to his study of *ḥadīth*, implying that Ibn al-Fāriḍ went as far as he could go in his literary studies; Ibn al-Fāriḍ then applied himself to the study of mysticism, which enhanced his amiable personality and elegant verse. Al-Mundhirī noted that the poet lived for a time in Mecca and later returned to Cairo, where he resided at Azhar. Finally, al-Mundhirī stated that he had studied *ḥadīth* as well as poetry with Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

A number of al-Mundhirī's statements were corroborated by another well-known *ḥadīth* scholar and student of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Yahyā al-'Aṭṭār (584–662/1188–1264). In his biographical collection of teachers al-'Aṭṭār proclaimed Ibn al-Fāriḍ to be "the eminent shaykh, the litterateur" who had⁴

excellent verse and a keen intellect. He followed the way of mysticism while embracing the Shāfi'i legal school. He resided in Mecca for a time. He associated with a group of the shaykhs.

Both al-Mundhirī and al-'Aṭṭār mentioned Ibn al-Fāriḍ's interest in Sufism. They appear, however, to have viewed their teacher more as a poet than a mystic, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse certainly inspired Ibn Khallikān (608–80/1211–82) to write his biography of the poet. Unlike

the three earlier accounts, Ibn Khallikān's biography probably was not based on personal contact with Ibn al-Fāriḍ, since Ibn Khallikān was not his student, nor did he mention ever having met the poet. Nevertheless, the biography contained in Ibn Khallikān's detailed and invaluable biographical dictionary, *Wafayāt al-ā'yān*, is the most extensive account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ written in the first decades following the poet's death, and it features perhaps the earliest written quotations of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse:⁵

Abū Ḥafṣ and Abū al-Qāsim, 'Umar ibn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Murshid ibn 'Alī, of Hama by origin, Egyptian by birth, residence, and death, known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ, having the title al-Sharaf [i.e., Sharaf al-Dīn].

He has a fine [*laṭīf*] volume of poetry in which his style is pure and elegant, following the mystics' way. He has an ode of about six hundred verses in accordance with [the mystics'] technical language and method.⁶

How fine is his statement in one of the long odes:⁷

Welcome to what

I was unworthy to receive,
the bearer's glad tidings
of relief from despair:

"Good news for you—
so strip off what's on you,
for you've been remembered
despite your crookedness!"

And his saying from another ode:⁸

Because of you,
I'm never free of envy.
So don't waste my night vigil
with the shocking phantom's disgrace.

Ask the night's stars
if sleep ever visited my eyes,
for how can it visit
one it doesn't know?

And from it:⁹

And despite the skill
of those who describe his loveliness,

time will pass away with things in him
yet to be described!

He has rhymed couplets [*dūbayt*], colloquial verses [*mawāliyyā*], and riddles [*alghāz*].

I have heard that he was a pious, virtuous, and abstemious man. He lived for a time in Mecca—May God add to its honor! He made a fine companion and was praiseworthy. One of his companions told me that one day in solitude [*khakwah*], [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] was humming a line of al-Ḥarīrī, the author of the *al-Maqāmāt*.¹⁰

Who is the one who never sinned,
who is he who has only the best?

[The companion] said, “He heard a speaker—but saw no one—recite:

Muhammad, the guide, to whom
was Gabriel’s descent!”

A group of his companions recited his colloquial verses [*mawāliyyā*] to me about a young man who was a butcher by profession. They are clever, but I have not seen them in his *Dīwān*:

I said to a butcher: “I love you,
but oh how you cut and kill me!”

He said: “That’s my business,
so you scold me?”

He bent and kissed my foot to win me,
but he wanted my slaughter,
so he breathed on me
to skin me.¹¹

I have written it according to their usage, though they do not observe the final vowels or vowelings. Rather, they allow grammatical error; indeed, most of it is ungrammatical. So, let him who comes upon it not censure it.

[Ibn al-Fāriḍ] used to say: “I learned two verses in my sleep, and they are:

By the life
 of my longing for you,
 by the sanctity
 of dignified patience,

My eyes have never held
 other than you,
 nor have I desired
 another friend."¹²

His birthday was on the fourth of Dhū al-Qa‘dah, in the year 576 [1181] in Cairo, and he died there on Tuesday, the second of Jumādā I, in the year 632 [1235]. He was buried the next day at the foot of Mt. Muqaṭṭam. May God most high have mercy upon him!

Al-Fāriḍ is one who draws up the legal shares [*furūd*] that men must pay to women.¹³

This biography echoes statements by al-Mundhirī and al-‘Aṭṭār, and in some instances Ibn Khallikān elaborated on his older contemporaries. Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s piety and abstinence are mentioned for the first time, and he is described as being of good company as well as good-natured. Further, Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s humming of al-Ḥarīrī’s verse regarding a sinless person suggests that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was at times preoccupied with religious and ethical questions.

But, while Ibn Khallikān noted Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s interest in mysticism and his long mystical poem the *al-Tāʿīyah al-kubrā*, he never called Ibn al-Fāriḍ a Sufi nor did he even mention the poet’s study of *ḥadīth*. Rather, Ibn Khallikān was concerned with Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s literary work, and so he noted the existence of a collection of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetry, which included rhymed couplets, colloquial verse, and riddles, all signs of an accomplished litterateur. Ibn Khallikān gave an example of the colloquial verse, though one not included in early editions of the *Dīwān*. Apparently, Ibn Khallikān, and those who related these verses to him, felt them to be a delightful example of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s literary wit.¹⁴

Finally, Ibn Khallikān’s appraisal of Ibn al-Fāriḍ can be more accurately gauged by comparing his biography of this poet to accounts of Sufis and other poets found in the *Wafayāt*. Based on such a comparison, one finds that Ibn Khallikān recognized Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s use of mystical themes and terminology, while viewing him primarily as a poet, not as a Sufi. Ibn Khallikān appreciated and admired Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verse, which he believed to be quite good but short of the best.¹⁵

Family and Courtly Life

These early sources provide vital information regarding Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and poetry, yet they say nothing about his female relatives and children and very little about his means of livelihood. Later sources, however, note that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had at least one daughter, who is never named, and two sons, 'Abd al-Raḥmān and Kamāl al-Dīn Muhammad. The biographer al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) gave a short notice to the latter, who died in 689/1290. Al-Ṣafadī stated that Kamāl al-Dīn studied *ḥadīth* with Ibn al-Fāriḍ and other scholars and that he became a *ḥadīth* scholar and teacher in his own right.¹⁶ But to later generations Kamāl al-Dīn was better known as the primary source for the *Dībājah*, written by his nephew, 'Alī, Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

'Alī was Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson by the poet's daughter (hence his designation as *sibṭ*), and he composed this hagiography on his grandfather about one hundred years after the poet's death. Although 'Alī was not writing a biography, the *Dībājah* does contain some relevant biographical material, which may be gleaned from the miraculous stories and fabulous tales related in the work. According to 'Alī, the young Ibn al-Fāriḍ accompanied his father at legal proceedings and in study sessions, though he was more inclined to the solitary life. After his father died Ibn al-Fāriḍ traveled to Mecca, where he lived for fifteen years. He then returned to Cairo and took up residence at the Azhar mosque, where he composed poetry, which he dictated to his students. In 628/1231 Ibn al-Fāriḍ again went on the pilgrimage to Mecca, where he met the renowned Sufi Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234). Ibn al-Fāriḍ was accompanied by his two sons, who were among those invested by al-Suhrawardī with the habit of his order.

This information given by 'Alī does not contradict our earlier sources, though one may question whether Ibn al-Fāriḍ ever met al-Suhrawardī and how long the poet spent in the Hijaz.¹⁷ At present there is no way of knowing precisely when Ibn al-Fāriḍ first left for Mecca, but he was probably a young student traveling to further his education. If he did in fact stay there for about fifteen years, he must have returned to Cairo before 620/1223, since one of his students, Muhammad Ibn al-Najjār (578–643/1182–1245), left Cairo and returned to Baghdad in that year.¹⁸

'Alī also related two tales involving possible sources of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's income. The stories tell of unsuccessful attempts by the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil (r. 615–35/1218–38) and one of his amirs, Fakhr al-Dīn 'Uthmān (d. 629/1232), to build a tomb for the poet and give him large sums of money. Despite the improbability of these specific events, 'Alī may have been right to assert his grandfather's independence from the

regime and its court, and his refusal to accept royal patronage, which many considered to be morally tainted.

Similar to other Islamic dynasties, the Ayyubids encouraged and patronized poetry for purposes of propaganda and legitimation. Court poets composed verses that praised the sultans for their military exploits and the religious fervor, which supposedly drove them to defend Islam and foster Muslim unity. Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk (550–608/1155–1211), a panegyrist of the famous Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (= Saladin [532–89/1138–93]), wrote:¹⁹

The Arab community
has become mighty
by the nation of the Turks.

And the crusader king
has been humbled
by Ibn Ayyūb!

For in the time of Ibn Ayyūb,
Aleppo became part of Egypt,
and Egypt part of Aleppo.

With these verses the poet praised his Kurdish and Turkish overlords for reinvigorating the Islamic community, and he singled out Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ibn Ayyūb for defeating the Crusaders. Further, Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk implied that, as a natural consequence of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's pious endeavors, Egypt and Syria were properly united, though in fact Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had wrested much of his Syrian territory from rival Muslim rulers, while allowing the Crusaders to retain some of their strongholds in the area. Clearly, then, such poetry is more than simple eulogy, since it contains political positions and interpretations of events. Not surprisingly, money, precious gifts, and important government offices were bestowed on those poets who could articulate a ruler's actions and aspirations and legitimize them within an acceptable Islamic framework.²⁰

No such political panegyric poetry has ever been ascribed, however, to Ibn al-Fāriḍ. References to rulers, influential amirs, or historical events contemporary with him are conspicuous by their absence from his verse. This is not to say that the important persons and events of this time did not affect Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who must have been touched by the wars, pestilence, and famine that were all too frequent in his lifetime. Yet Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry was of a different type, one not concerned with the fleeting desires of dynasts.

Still, this does not eliminate the possibility that a sultan or amir may have offered Ibn al-Fāriḍ a gift in appreciation of fine poetry. Al-Malik al-Kāmil, in particular, appears to have been a lover of poetry and

scholarship, which he substantially patronized.²¹ But, other than ‘Alī’s *Dībājah*, our sources do not mention any contacts between Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the royal court. Further, Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s residence at a mosque may imply that the poet had little inclination toward government service and the moral compromise it represented.

The Master Poet

Many *ḥadīth* scholars held teaching positions that provided some income, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ may have received a stipend for relating *ḥadīth*. However, he probably earned a reasonable sum from instructing his students in poetry, perhaps enough to support himself and his family.

Poetry was taught like other important subjects of the day; the master recited the lesson, which the students wrote down and memorized. With time and perseverance a student could internalize the forms, motifs, rhymes, and meters of poetry and could begin to compose his own verse. The master poet no doubt criticized and corrected his students’ compositions, refining their poetic sensibilities, which would be essential to their future.²²

The extent to which an individual studied poetry differed in accordance with the desire to learn and master the subject. Those who wished only a general knowledge of poetry might have read an anthology or two and works by rhetoricians. Also, they may have occasionally attended *ḥalqahs*, or “circles,” at which poetry was read and taught. More serious students who aspired to be fine poets would have regularly attended these circles and sought out more intensive contacts with the great poets of the day. Sometimes a student became a *rāwī*, or “transmitter,” of verse composed by one or several poets, by memorizing their poetry. Neither al-Mundhirī, al-‘Aṭṭār, Ibn al-Najjār, nor another student, Ibn al-A‘mā (d. 692/1293), however, appear to have been a *rāwī* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. If Ibn al-Fāriḍ had a *rāwī*, it was probably his son Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad.²³

Although most poetry students did not become *rāwīs*, they often obtained *ijāzahs*, or “certifications,” of having read and studied a given work, which they in turn could teach to others. Al-Mundhirī probably obtained an *ijāzah* for Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Diwān* and the *al-Tā’rīyah al-kubrā*, and many copies of both works were made and studied during the thirteenth century.²⁴ Though a student could receive an *ijāzah* for a work without ever having met its author, personal contact and instruction no doubt enhanced an education and insured proper certification. Recognized poets such as Ibn al-Fāriḍ must have been in demand, and this was clearly the case in a famous literary dispute that took place in Cairo.

Ibn Isrā’īl (603–77/1206–78) was one of the better poets of the thir-

teenth century and one said to have composed poetry following "the way of Ibn al-Fāriḍ." The sincerity of his Sufism and the soundness of his doctrinal positions were doubted by some of his contemporaries, who, nevertheless, praised the high quality of his poetry, much of which was panegyrics for the Ayyubid sultans.²⁵ According to several sources, Ibn Isrāʾīl chanced upon a fine poem while he was on the pilgrimage and so admired it that he claimed it as his own. Apparently, the poem belonged to another rising poet of the time, Shihāb al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn al-Khiyamī (602–85/1205–86).²⁶ The two claimants later met in Cairo at a meeting of litterateurs, and an argument ensued regarding the authorship of the ode, which began:²⁷

Oh goal of my quest,
my sole desire,
to you, the search returns;
in you, the quest ends.

Both poets agreed that Ibn al-Fāriḍ should judge the matter, so he in turn requested that both Ibn Isrāʾīl and Ibn al-Khiyamī compose a number of verses similar to the contested poem ending in *b* and using the same rhyme and meter. Both men complied with his request. When they had finished their recitations Ibn al-Fāriḍ turned to Ibn Isrāʾīl and recited:²⁸

You copied but fell short
of the cool white teeth!

This hemistich is from verse 23 of the disputed ode, which reads:

Oh lightning flash appearing
in the highlands of al-Raqmatān,
you copied but fell short
of the cool white teeth!

The verse implies that the beloved's smile is so bright that nature can only imitate but never match the brilliance of her teeth. So, Ibn al-Fāriḍ applied this verse to Ibn Isrāʾīl's futile efforts to compose poetry comparable to the disputed poem. Ibn Isrāʾīl did not contest Ibn al-Fāriḍ's decision in favor of Ibn al-Khiyamī, and after the session he left Egypt in disgrace.²⁹

This story sheds light upon the way in which some literary disputes were resolved but also upon Ibn al-Fāriḍ's literary activities and reputation. Ibn al-Fāriḍ was probably chosen as a mediator in this dispute, as

one source noted, due to his “knowledge of the art of belles lettres and poetic criticism.”³⁰ But it is also possible that both Ibn al-Khiyamī and Ibn Isrāʾīl had been students of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who then would have been the logical choice to judge between the two men. Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s grandson, ‘Alī, claimed that Ibn al-Khiyamī was “like a son” to Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who took the youth with him on pilgrimage in 628/1231.³¹ Although there is no evidence of such a strong relationship with Ibn Isrāʾīl, practically all accounts of him note that much of his poetry was in conscious imitation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s mystical verse.³²

It should be reiterated that the argument centered on poetry and not on mysticism. Certainly, all three poets had mystical proclivities and used Sufi ideas and terms in their verse. But the dispute involved the authorship of a poem and not the soundness of religious doctrine. The issue was resolved by Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s literary intuition during a gathering of litterateurs, which suggests that Ibn al-Fāriḍ actively participated in the literary and cultural life of the time. Further, in a slightly later notice to Ibn al-Fāriḍ the Arab historian Abū al-Fidā (672–732/1273–1331) stated that Ibn al-Fāriḍ composed:³³

excellent poems among which is his ode that he made [*‘ami-lahā*] in accordance with the way of the mystics, it being about six hundred verses.

Significantly, Abū al-Fidā chose the verb *‘amil* (to do, to work, to make, to manufacture) to refer to Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s composition of his mystical poem; this is the language of literary craftsmanship, not of religious inspiration. To Abū al-Fidā, and many other Muslims of the thirteenth century, Ibn al-Fāriḍ was an accomplished poet, probably with mystical inclinations, but not an enlightened gnostic and still less one of God’s saints.

Poet to Sufi

In contrast to this sober image of Ibn al-Fāriḍ was an early alternative one of him as an inspired and articulate Sufi. This is quite evident in two stories found in the *Kitāb al-Wahīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawhīd*, a work on Islamic mysticism by the theologian ‘Abd al-Ghaffār al-Qūṣī (d. 708/1309). Al-Qūṣī related both stories in a chapter on *samāʿ*, the very controversial “audition” of inspirational verse that might induce ecstasy, a practice he defended:³⁴

It is related that, if an audition were held in Cairo or Fuṣṭāt and the shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Fāriḍ did not attend, that

it would not be delightful. So it happened that someone invited the shaykh and held an audition for him, but the shaykh was dispirited (*kāna ʿinda-l-shaykhi qabḍun*), and so the occasion was ill at ease because the shaykh was. So the host was pained, but the eloquent singer (*al-mughannī*) said to him, "Give me ten dinars, and I'll delight (*absuṭu*) the shaykh for you!" [The host] replied, "Fine." So the singer asked God's help and recited:

My tears
left a part of me
in the Hijaz
on the day of separation.

And I suppose—
no I am certain—
that it was my heart,
for I don't see it with me!

Then the shaykh Ibn al-Fāriḍ arose and went into ecstasy, and with that a splendid moment [*waqt jalīl*] passed over all.

In this story al-Qūṣī affirmed Ibn al-Fāriḍ's spiritual sensitivity by alluding to the poet's enlightened state with Sufi terminology. *Qabḍ* (constriction) and *bast* (expansion) form a contrasting pair of mystical states (*ḥāl* [pl. *aḥwāl*]), corresponding to contrition and exhilaration, between which a mystic fluctuates during his spiritual quest. Application of these terms to Ibn al-Fāriḍ left no doubt about his spiritual status, which was further supported by the use of the word *waqt* (moment, time) to describe the end result of the poet's ecstasy; in the Sufi lexicon *waqt* signifies the moment of mystical inspiration, the "eternal now."³⁵

Al-Qūṣī related his second story of Ibn al-Fāriḍ from a Sufi contemporary, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Munūfī (608–703/1210–1304), who said:³⁶

One day I was in the Friday mosque at Fuṣṭāṭ,³⁷ and Ibn al-Fāriḍ was there with a circle [of students] around him. A youth arose from where [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] was, came to me, and said, "A strange event occurred to me when I was with the shaykh"—that is Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

I said, "What is it?"

He said, "He gave me some dirhams and said, 'Buy something with this to eat.' So, I bought [some food], and we walked to the shore and sailed up [the Nile] in a boat until we

entered Bahnasā.³⁸ He knocked on a door, and a person came out and said, 'In the name of God!' [i.e., 'Come in!']. So the shaykh went in, and I went with him. Suddenly, there were women with tambourines and reed flutes in their hands, all singing to him. The shaykh danced until he was done and exhausted. We left and traveled until we arrived at Fustāt.

"But I kept thinking to myself, 'How can the shaykh dance to the singing of women?' Within the hour the person who had opened the door came and said to [Ibn al-Fāriḍ], 'Oh sir, such and such a woman has died!' and he mentioned one of those who had sung to him. So Ibn al-Fāriḍ sought the slave dealer [*ḥujarī*] and said to him, 'Buy me a slave girl'—or perhaps he said, 'Replace [this loss].'

"Then he grabbed me by the ear and said to me, 'Don't you dare rebuke the mystics!'—or 'Don't criticize the mystics!'—'All of those [women] you saw today are my slave girls!'"

Al-Qūṣī added that his informant, 'Abd al-'Azīz, felt that Ibn al-Fāriḍ should have told the young man, before their visit to Bahnasā, that the women were his legal property, which made the poet's interactions with them lawful. 'Abd al-'Azīz believed this would have been best, for, had the youth died while harboring a bad opinion of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the poor boy would surely have been punished by God. But al-Qūṣī countered that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had known by mystical insight (*kashf*) that the youth would not die, and so he left the boy ignorant of the real situation in order to clearly demonstrate to him later the heedlessness of criticizing true mystics.³⁹

Both of al-Qūṣī's tales portray Ibn al-Fāriḍ as a powerful mystic with the abilities to produce states in others and discern a person's innermost thoughts. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's attendance at an audition, in the first story, was requisite for the session's success, and when the Muslim holy land of the Hijaz was mentioned, reminding Ibn al-Fāriḍ of his days there, a spiritual resonance was established, flowing from the mystically attuned poet to the other listeners. Likewise, in the second story Ibn al-Fāriḍ was moved to dance by music and song, and later he used the occasion to induce another's enlightenment.

The Gnostic Poet

These accounts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ directly link his spiritual state to his aesthetic sensibilities and so underscore an important feature of his

posthumous spiritual reputation. Dance, music, and poetry often stir human emotions, but Sufis have maintained that these feelings may be intensified and transformed within the heart of the spiritual adept. From this perspective many began to regard Ibn al-Fāriḍ as an ecstatic poet. Hearing a verse or song, he would fall into a trance, which later served as the source for his amazing verse and supernatural powers.⁴⁰ This view undoubtedly contributed to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's religious popularity, and his reputation as an enlightened and inspired mystic was elaborated further by commentaries on his poetry. These commentaries contain scant biographical data, yet the terms used to refer to Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and the interpretations of his verse, reveal a deepening reverence for the poet and his work.

The earliest known commentator, the Sufi Saʿīd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d. 699/1300), noted in an introduction to his commentary on the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* that mystics varied in their allusions to what they had spiritually witnessed and experienced. Though all descriptions fell short of the states described, some individuals were more expressive due to their determination and perseverance. Such gifted individuals wrote mystical poetry to spread their message and to encourage others to follow the mystic path. Al-Farghānī declared that, among these eloquent mystics, the greatest was Ibn al-Fāriḍ:⁴¹

After his vicissitudes in the valleys and peaks of love, and after his evolving stages among the lofty mountains of proximity to God [*qurb*], he was acquainted with the splendors of the beauty of this exalted reality to the most perfect degree, beyond the veils of the robe of his pride.

So he devoted himself to spending the rest of this life and the next, in stringing the necklace of unique and guarded pearls, in order to . . . clarify the requirements of the mystical station [*maqām*]. For the perfection of the follower results from the thing followed, and the beauty of the part . . . results from its whole.

Even allowing for the hyperbole that classical Arabic commentators traditionally employed when first mentioning the author of their subject work, al-Farghānī perceived Ibn al-Fāriḍ to be a Sufi poet who had scaled mystical heights. Al-Farghānī left no doubt concerning the spiritual sources from which, he believed, Ibn al-Fāriḍ had drawn his great poems. The mystic poet's own intense experiences of love and his metamorphosis in the phases of divine proximity inspired his profoundly religious verse, and al-Farghānī interpreted the poems accordingly; drinking wine sym-

bolized Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical experience, while the burning pains of love alluded to this mystic's pained separation from God.⁴²

Following al-Farghānī's interpretation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ as an impassioned Sufi were two later commentators, 'Izz al-Dīn al-Kāshānī (d. 735/1334) and Dā'ūd al-Qaysarī (d. ca. 747/1346). Al-Kāshānī declared Ibn al-Fāriḍ "the shaykh, the scholar, the realized and thorough gnostic,"⁴³ while al-Qaysarī extolled the poet as "the exemplar of the gnostics of the worlds, the chief of the greatest scholars, the pride of those with spiritual insight, the adornment of the saints, and the axis of the true friends [*aṣfiyā'*]."⁴⁴ Al-Kāshānī and al-Qaysarī also followed al-Farghānī in their assertions of the inspired nature of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse, and they went so far as to draw daring parallels between the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* and the inimitable Qur'ān. Echoing the Qur'ānic challenge to the unbelievers to "produce a chapter like it" (*fa'tū bi-sūratin mithlihi* [10:38]), al-Kāshānī wrote of the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā*.⁴⁵

With its composition, he disabled the great masters among the eloquent composers and fluent orators, from producing the likes of it [*ītyān bi-mithālihā*]. By its excellence, he amazed the great authorities of spiritual insight and vision, as well as the sultans of meaning and eloquence, and they all recognized the perfection of its beauty.

And al-Qaysarī added:⁴⁶

No one has ever produced the likes of it [*lam ya't bi-mithlihā*] in any age or epoch! Its expression, by nature, will never again be permitted as long as night turns to day, and it is impossible to describe it by explanation or characterize it by allusion!

Just as the Qur'ān had proclaimed itself to be Muhammad's miracle and the proof of his prophecy, so too did these Sufi commentators point to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's extraordinary verse as evidence of his deep mystical wisdom and his exalted saintly status; his poetry had become his miracle.

Heresies

Such appraisals of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his poetry present him as an enlightened gnostic and divinely inspired poet of the Sufi way. Even more specifically, the mystical theologies expounded by al-Farghānī, al-Kāshānī, and al-Qaysarī in their commentaries reveal that they believed Ibn al-Fāriḍ to have been a spokesman for the very popular doctrines of Ibn

al-ʿArabī (560–637/1165–1240), unquestionably the most influential theorist of Islamic mysticism. Of particular importance was Ibn al-ʿArabī's theosophy of divine unity, later known as *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being), which posited that “the existence of everything is identical with the relation of that particular being to Being itself, that existents are nothing but the relation they possess to the Absolute.”⁴⁷ Based on this ontological principle, creator and creation—indeed, all things—are interdependent and so possess only relative existence. Yet, when seen aright from an appropriate mystical perspective, everything reflects a facet of unlimited divine unity.⁴⁸

Although there is no reliable evidence that Ibn al-Fāriḍ ever knew or embraced Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings, the direct link between the Wujūdī theosophical school and the commentaries was noted by a leading Cairene Sufi of the thirteenth century, Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī (d. 697/1298). He claimed that al-Farghānī had derived his commentary on the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* from Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), probably Ibn al-ʿArabī's most famous and influential student. Al-Aykī is reported to have told Ibn al-Fāriḍ's son, Kamāl al-Dīn Muhammad:⁴⁹

Our shaykh [Ṣadr al-Dīn's] sessions would be attended by groups of scholars and students of religious knowledge, and he would . . . conclude his discourse by mentioning a verse from the ode, *Naẓm al-sulūk*. He would speak on it—in Persian—words that were strange and mystical, which were not understood save by the possessor of intuition and desire.

The next day he would say, “Another meaning came to me on the commentary of the verse we spoke about yesterday,” and he would say a more amazing thing than he had the day before!

[Ṣadr al-Dīn] used to say, “It is desirable that the Sufi memorize this poem, and it is requisite for one who understands it that he comment on it.”

The shaykh Saʿīd al-Dīn al-Farghānī devoted himself with determination to understand what Ṣadr al-Dīn mentioned as commentary on this ode, and he wrote it down in his presence, first in Persian, and, after that, he translated it into Arabic.

Like al-Farghānī, al-Qayṣarī was also an adherent of al-Qūnawī's interpretations of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings, and, although al-Kāshānī was not a member of the Wujūdī school, he interpreted the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* in similar monistic terms.⁵⁰ Clearly, then, these commentators are crucial to an understanding of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's postmortem metamorphosis. Their

conviction that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse was a personal account of monistic religious experiences led to his portrayal as a great mystic of the Ibn al-ʿArabī school, and this interpretation of him was a vital link between the earliest biographies of Ibn al-Fāriḍ the poet and later accounts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ the saint.

But these commentaries also provided ammunition to those who were suspicious of the doctrinal underpinning of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry and of his *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, in particular. A number of Muslim legal scholars and theologians actively opposed beliefs promoting or resembling those of divine incarnation in creation (*ḥulūl* / *ḥulūlīyah*), mystical union with the divine (*ittiḥād* / *ittiḥādīyah*), or monism (*waḥdat al-wujūd* / *ittiḥādīyah*). Such doctrines, they asserted, undermined the God-humanity distinction upon which all law was based. Though very few of these scholars totally rejected Sufism, they did attempt to censor mystical works, like the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, which they believed encouraged deviation from God's truth as revealed in the Qurʾān and prophetic custom of Muhammad and codified in the law.⁵¹

This led another student of al-Qūnawī, ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (610–90/1213–91), to compose his commentary on the ode in support of the poet. Unlike al-Farghānī, whose commentary he paraphrased, al-Tilimsānī did not laud Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetic skills, as he assumed a more defensive position in order to prove the genuine quality of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical experiences and the soundness of his religious beliefs. Al-Tilimsānī did not specify who had criticized Ibn al-Fāriḍ, saying only that they had misunderstood the poet and ascribed the doctrine of incarnation to him as well as other things that violated Islamic law. Perhaps he was making an oblique reference to a controversy that had occurred in Cairo around 687/1288. In this dispute Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz (d. 695/1296), the vizier of the Mamluk sultan Qalāʾūn and chief Shāfiʿī judge, publicly disgraced Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī for encouraging the study of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, which the vizier believed propagated incarnationism.⁵²

It is, however, more likely, that al-Tilimsānī was consciously refuting a Sufi rival, al-Quṭb Ibn al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 686/1287), who had denounced al-Tilimsānī along with Ibn al-Fāriḍ and others for being incarnationists.⁵³ As part of his defense, al-Tilimsānī related an account in which the prophet Muhammad allegedly appeared to Ibn al-Fāriḍ in a dream and asked him what he had named his long ode. Ibn al-Fāriḍ replied that he had named it *Lawāʾiḥ al-janān wa-rawāʾiḥ al-jinān* (The Flashes of the Heart and the Fragrances of the Gardens). But Muhammad said: "No. Rather, name it *Naẓm al-sulūk*." According to Islamic tradition, to have met the prophet in a dream is to have met him in person, and so al-

Tilimsānī offered this story as a clear proof of Muhammad's approval of the poem and his high regard for its author.⁵⁴

But such popular tales probably had little effect on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's detractors, such as the Ḥanbalī jurist Aḥmad Ibn Ḥamdān (631–95/1234–96), who wrote a commentary critical of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*. Though his work is lost, quotations from it preserved by later writers show that Ibn Ḥamdān believed the ode to be overflowing with doctrines of incarnation and monism.⁵⁵ Similarly, other critics in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries denounced what they perceived as Ibn al-Fāriḍ's adherence to monism. These opponents included Ibn al-Qaṣṭalānī's student, the noted grammarian Abū Ḥayyān (654–745/1256–1344),⁵⁶ and, more important, the great Ḥanbalī legal scholar and theologian Ibn Taymīyah (661–728/1263–1328).

Ibn Taymīyah was an intractable opponent of Ibn al-ʿArabī and anyone else whom he perceived to be an adherent of the unity of being. Ibn Taymīyah misinterpreted Ibn al-ʿArabī's abstract and sophisticated doctrines as the grossest pantheism, and on these grounds he took exception to specific verses in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*. Not to be beaten by al-Tilimsānī, Ibn Taymīyah related his own story, which alleged that, when Ibn al-Fāriḍ was at the point of death, he realized the vanity of his belief that he was God and so repented, saying:⁵⁷

If my resting place
in love near you
is what I've seen,
then I wasted my life.

A desire
seized my soul for a time,
but now it seems
just a jumbled dream.

Apparently, Ibn Taymīyah and other critics of Ibn al-Fāriḍ accepted the Sufi commentaries on his verse at face value, as accurate portrayals of the poet's intent and belief, and, not surprisingly, they attacked these works too. When Ibn Taymīyah censured adherents of incarnationist and monistic doctrines, he condemned Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Qūnawī, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ as well as al-Tilimsānī and al-Farghānī, "who commented on the ode of Ibn al-Fāriḍ."⁵⁸ Even earlier the Shāfiʿī scholar Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (577–660/1181–1262) had rebuked Sufi commentators in general for attempting to interpret poetry metaphorically. He believed that divine truths could not possibly be alluded to by erotic imagery, not to mention by wine and intoxication, which were forbidden by religious law.⁵⁹

But these sporadic criticisms of Ibn al-Fāriḍ did not check his rise in popularity, and, in fact, they reinforced the popular Sufi view of the poet. By the beginning of the fourteenth century the notorious image of Ibn al-Fāriḍ as an extremist Sufi was visibly interacting with the two prominent conceptions of him as a learned poet and an inspired mystic. A few decades later 'Alī, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson, would attempt to reconcile these positions with his own personal interpretation based on family sources.

Sanctification

Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ and His *Dībājah*

Often in the genesis of a saint the second generation fashions and recounts miraculous proofs of a person's saintly status, and it was Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson, 'Alī (fl. 735/1334), who contributed most to the poet's sanctification. 'Alī made a collection of his grandfather's poetry, prefaced by an account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's adult life. This introduction, the *Dībājah*, reports in some detail the poet's inspirational moments and creative states, which had been assumed by the early writers.

'Alī was born sometime after his grandfather's death in 632/1235. Hence, the tone of the *Dībājah* is more one of awe and reverence than of personal affection.¹ As expected, 'Alī never quoted his grandfather directly; the majority of his stories were based on conversations with his uncle, Kamāl al-Dīn Muhammad, one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's sons. This direct link to the poet via his offspring lends a factual quality to 'Alī's unadorned Arabic prose, and this has led many scholars to read the *Dībājah* as a biography and defense of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

'Alī was certainly aware of criticisms leveled against his grandfather's poetry and the supposed Sufi doctrines underlying it. But he did not state—as had al-Tilimsānī before him and others after—that he intended to refute the critics and establish Ibn al-Fāriḍ's agreement with “correct” Islam. Rather, he appended his introduction to the *Dīwān* as “a memorial [*tadhkirah*] . . . to the glorious deeds of the fathers and grandfathers,” as a repository for “the secrets of [Ibn al-Fāriḍ's] renowned miracles [*karāmāt*] and the excellence of his appearance.”² 'Alī's purpose was not refutation or biography but hagiography, the praise and glorification of an ancestor whom he admired and venerated. When we read the work as such we discover and understand a decisive stage in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's rise to sainthood.³

With hagiographic intent 'Alī structured his *Dībājah* around a few major themes roughly divided into four sections: (1) stories of the young Ibn al-

Fāriḍ's mystical calling; (2) accounts of his inspired states and the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā*; (3) stories of the elderly poet's religiosity, including his dealings with the ruling elite; and (4) Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death and a long account of his last hours and burial. As a preface to his stories, 'Alī presented a short sketch of his grandfather, providing an appropriate image of Ibn al-Fāriḍ to be borne in mind by his readers. Quoting Ibn al-Fāriḍ's son, 'Alī wrote:⁴

The shaykh—may God be satisfied with him—was of medium build, his face being handsome with a ruddy appearance. When he participated in an audition [*samā'*] and showed ecstasy, a state coming over him, his face would increase in beauty and brightness, and sweat would pour from the rest of him until it flowed beneath his feet onto the ground. I have not seen among Arabs or non-Arabs one as handsome of form, and I, of all people, resemble him the most in appearance.

He had a light, a diffidence, a splendor, and a venerableness. When he attended a session, there would appear over the people there a silence and reverence, a tranquility and dignity. I saw a group of the shaykhs from the jurists and the mendicants, and the great ones of the country, from the amirs, viziers, and the judges, and the leaders of the people, attending his session, and they treated him with the utmost respect and humbleness; when they addressed him, it was as if they were addressing a great king.

When he walked in the city, people would crowd around him seeking spiritual blessing [*barakah*] and benediction from him, while trying to kiss his hand. But he would not allow anyone to do that, rather he shook hands with them. His clothes were fine and his odor fragrant.

He would spend amply on those who visited him, being very generous. He never demeaned himself by seeking to obtain anything from this world, and he never accepted anything from anyone. The Sultan Muḥammad al-Malik al-Kāmil . . . sent 1,000 dinars to him, but he sent them back. [The Sultan] asked if he could prepare a cenotaph for him next to the grave of [the Sultan's] mother in the domed shrine of al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī . . . but [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] would not allow it. Then [the Sultan] asked his permission to build a shrine especially for him, but he was uneasy with that.

This first glimpse of Ibn al-Fāriḍ is one of an enlightened and spiritually attuned mystic. He was handsome and distinguished, honored by the

most respectable classes of society. Although well dressed and generous, Ibn al-Fāriḍ never craved the things of the material world and kept his distance from royal patronage. Al-Malik al-Kāmil's request to build a shrine for Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the deference others showed the poet as they sought his blessings suggest to the reader that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was venerated during his lifetime for his piety. Further, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's refusal to allow people to kiss his hand and his disregard for the sultan's attentions confirmed the poet's saintly humility.

Early Years

ʿAlī elaborated on this general assessment of his grandfather, beginning with Ibn al-Fāriḍ's recollections of his youthful asceticism. When Ibn al-Fāriḍ obtained his father's permission to go into solitude, he would wander in the Muqaṭṭam hills east of Cairo. Then, out of regard for his father, he would return and sit with him in court and in study sessions. The craving for solitude would seize the youth, however, and, with his father's consent, he would return to wandering. This was the situation until Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father was asked to be the chief judge; he refused, gave up his judicial life, and devoted himself to God.⁵

In this account Ibn al-Fāriḍ is obedient and considerate to his father, who is presented as a well-respected scholar and official. His father's refusal to accept the position of chief judge would have legitimized his piety and religious sincerity among Muslims, since this office had always been considered morally tainted by temptations to compromise one's integrity in order to please a ruler or for material gain.⁶ Ibn al-Fāriḍ's father appears to have understood the persistent spiritual unrest that led his son to a solitary life, and in his old age he too shunned human society.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ continued his asceticism after his father's death, but he remained unenlightened until one day when he passed by a law school, the Suyūfīyah *madrasah*.⁷

I found an old man there, a greengrocer at the door of the law school doing ablutions out of order; he washed his hands, then his legs, then he wiped his head and washed his face.

So I said to him, "Oh shaykh, you are this old, in the land of Islam, at the door of the law school, among the scholars of Muslim jurisprudence, yet you are doing the ablutions out of the order prescribed by religion?"

He looked at me and said, "Oh ʿUmar! You will not be enlightened in Egypt. You will be enlightened only in the

Hijaz, in Mecca—may God glorify it! So head for it, for the time of your enlightenment is near!”

Then I knew that the man was among the saints of God most high and that he disguised himself with [this] manner of living and by feigning ignorance of the order of ablutions. So I sat before him and said, “Oh sir, I am here but Mecca is there, and I will not find a mount or a travel companion in the non-pilgrimage months.”

Then he looked at me and pointed with his hand and said, “This is Mecca before you!” And I looked with him and saw Mecca—may God glorify it! So I left him and sought it, it remaining before me until I entered it at that moment. When I entered, enlightenment came to me wave after wave, and it never left.

This account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s mystical awakening belongs to a well-established genre of conversion stories in which an old saint readily educates a naive, though well-meaning, youth.⁸ Here the young Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who has led a life of self-abnegation, lacks the necessary spark to kindle the fire of illumination. Proud of his piety, Ibn al-Fāriḍ contemptuously criticized an elder’s behavior, but he was amazed when the old man spoke his name and knew of his inner spiritual frustration at being unenlightened. This shock jolted Ibn al-Fāriḍ out of his complacency, as he realized that the old man was, in fact, a saint. Humbly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ submitted to the shaykh, who visualized Mecca, the *axis mundi* of Islam, before them. Attentive to his master’s advice, Ibn al-Fāriḍ followed the image to Mecca, where he was enlightened permanently. The heedlessness of youth and the letter of the law gave way to wisdom and mystical insight. ‘Alī found an allusion to this enlightenment in two verses by his grandfather:

Oh my night companion,
refresh my spirit
singing of Mecca
if you wish to cheer me.

In her was my intimacy
and the ascent of my sanctity,
and my station was Abraham’s
and the enlightenment clear!⁹

Having established Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s possession of gnosis at the outset, ‘Alī substantiated this claim with miracles. He said that the wild animals

of the Hijaz did not run from Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who was accompanied every day during the five prayers at the Ka'bah by a ferocious lion. Further, Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the lion would daily transverse the ten-day journey between the oasis in which Ibn al-Fāriḍ lived and Mecca. The lion would repeatedly ask Ibn al-Fāriḍ to ride, but he would refuse, no doubt out of humility and concern for another living creature. One day a group of religious scholars who resided at the Ka'bah were said to have been speculating on the preparations Ibn al-Fāriḍ must make in order to undertake the arduous desert crossing, when suddenly they saw the lion and heard him say, "Oh sir, ride!" They immediately asked God's forgiveness and apologized to Ibn al-Fāriḍ for having believed that his coming to Mecca every day to pray was due to anything less than a miracle from God.¹⁰

After fifteen years of spiritual preparation in the wilderness of the Hijaz, Ibn al-Fāriḍ heard the voice of the greengrocer calling him back to Cairo: "Oh 'Umar, return to Cairo to attend my death and pray over me!" Ibn al-Fāriḍ instantly returned, in time to find his master on the point of death. The shaykh requested that his burial be at a place called al-ʿĀriḍ in the Qarāfah cemetery, and he told Ibn al-Fāriḍ to wait there for a man to meet him. Ibn al-Fāriḍ fulfilled his shaykh's wishes, and after the old man died a man descended from Mt. Muqattam, though his feet never touched the ground. The two men prayed over the corpse. During the prayer Ibn al-Fāriḍ noticed rows of white birds and green birds hovering in the air and praying along with them, and then a huge green bird alighted at the foot of the bier, gobbled up the body, and rejoined the other birds, as they flew off singing loudly in praise of God. Ibn al-Fāriḍ was speechless, but his companion explained:

Oh 'Umar, haven't you heard that the spirits of the martyrs are in the stomachs of green birds, which roam where they will in Paradise? They are the martyrs of the sword. As for the martyrs of love, both their spirits and their bodies are in the stomachs of green birds, and this man was among them!¹¹

The stranger from the mountain added that once he too had been among this elect group, but he had sinned and so was excluded. Now he was doing penance for his error. Then he turned away, ascended the mountain, and disappeared. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's son concluded this story saying:

My father said to me, "Oh Muhammad, I have mentioned this to you only to make you desire to enter our [mystical] way.

So, don't mention it to anyone during my lifetime." So I mentioned it to no one until he died.

This last comment clarifies Ibn al-Fāriḍ's purpose for relating the miraculous events of this story; he wanted to strengthen his son's commitment to the Sufi way but without drawing undue attention to his own special role in the events.¹² No doubt, this story of the greengrocer's death and burial enhanced Ibn al-Fāriḍ's reputation and the sanctity of the site where he also was buried.¹³ But 'Alī probably included this account to depict spiritual succession as Ibn al-Fāriḍ assumed his master's place as a saint of Cairo. As we shall see, this interpretation is supported by the last story in the *Dībājah*, which deals with Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death as witnessed by Ibrāhīm al-Ja'barī (599–687/1203–88), who discovered there that he too was a saint.

Inspired Verse

Not surprisingly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's privileged membership among the lovers of God is the theme of 'Alī's next story, in which the Prophet Muhammad appears to Ibn al-Fāriḍ in a dream to ask him his lineage. Ibn al-Fāriḍ testified that he was a descendant of the Sa'd tribe, the tribe of Ḥalimah, Muhammad's wet nurse, but the Prophet insisted that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was his direct relative. 'Alī explained the discrepancy in lineage by distinguishing between blood relations and those of love; the latter are nobler, for Noah's son and Muhammad's own uncle, Abū Ṭālib, perished for lack of faith, while others who were attached to Muhammad only by love of him were saved.¹⁴ 'Alī then mentioned one of his own dreams about another man's lineage to the Prophet, and, staying with the subject of dreams, he related from his uncle the story of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's dream of Muhammad and the Prophet's suggestion to name the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* the *Naẓm al-sulūk*.¹⁵

This led 'Alī to stories about the famous poem. The first is about a man who came to Ibn al-Fāriḍ requesting the poet's permission to write a two-volume commentary on the work. But Ibn al-Fāriḍ smiled and said, "Had I wanted, I could have commented two volumes on each verse," so profound was the ode. Next 'Alī related the passage quoted in the previous chapter concerning al-Aykī, al-Qūnawī, and al-Farghānī's commentary, which 'Alī had read.¹⁶

Turning his attention to the state in which Ibn al-Fāriḍ composed this great mystical poem, 'Alī noted that, unlike normal poets, who struggled to compose, his grandfather would become entranced and, upon recovery, recite. Quoting his uncle, 'Alī wrote:¹⁷

The shaykh . . . in most of his moments [of inspiration (*awqāt*)], was always perplexed, eyes fixed, hearing no one who spoke, not even seeing them. Sometimes he would be standing, sometimes sitting, sometimes he would lie down on his side, and sometimes he would throw himself down on his back wrapped in a shroud like a dead man. Ten consecutive days—more or less—would pass while he was in this state, he neither eating, drinking, speaking, nor moving, as has been said:

See the lovers felled
 in their encampments,
 like the youths of the Cave, not knowing
 how long they've lingered.

By God, had the lovers sworn
 to go mad from love or die,
 then they would not break
 their oath!¹⁸

Then he would regain consciousness and come to, and his first words would be a dictation of what God had enlightened him with of the ode *Nazm al-sulūk*.

This account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's trance confirms and develops the inferences of the earlier commentators concerning the poet's inspiration by giving a supposed eyewitness report. The poet's state resembles that of the pre-Islamic diviners, who sometimes covered their heads when possessed. Further, two chapters of the Qur'ān refer to Muhammad as being wrapped or covered, and 'Alī's readers would have recalled that, according to tradition, the Prophet Muhammad emerged from unconsciousness with God's revelation upon his heart. Entranced and unconscious, Ibn al-Fāriḍ was an unblemished surface upon which the divine mysteries were impressed.¹⁹

A Dispute

'Alī related another version of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's dream of the Prophet and the naming of the ode. This second account differs only slightly from the first story, and 'Alī probably included it for the additional information that, unlike most poets, who spent hours on a single line, Ibn al-Fāriḍ would awaken from his trance and instantly recite between thirty and fifty verses of the poem. 'Alī also may have cited this second account from an

unnamed anthologist to lend objective, nonfamilial evidence to prove his grandfather's exalted state when composing his ode. In any case both versions of the story unquestionably assert prophetic approval for this inspired, if controversial, poem.²⁰

‘Alī then concluded discussion of the *al-Tā’īyah al-kubrā* by reporting an incident involving the ode and Ibn al-Fāriq’s religious beliefs, which occurred at the end of Qalā’ūn’s sultanate (r. 678–89/1279–90). ‘Alī stated that, when the chief judge Taqī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Bint al-A‘azz (d. 695/1296) was Qalā’ūn’s vizier, he publicly criticized the leading Sufi official of Cairo, the shaykh al-shuyūkh, Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī (631–96/1234–98) at the latter’s al-Ṣalāḥīyah monastery, for urging the Sufis to study Ibn al-Fāriq’s *al-Tā’īyah al-kubrā*.²¹ Ibn Bint al-A‘azz believed that Ibn al-Fāriq showed an inclination toward incarnation (*ḥulūl*) in the work, and so the vizier denounced it. Al-Aykī was disgraced by Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s criticism of him and his verbal insults, and, as a result, al-Aykī cursed him, saying, “May God make an example of you as you have done to me!”²²

Later Ibn Bint al-A‘azz gave up the position of vizier, and then, following Qalā’ūn’s death, he was dismissed from his judgeship and imprisoned on charges of heresy, slander, and irreligious behavior. ‘Alī went on to say that a base person bore false witness against Ibn Bint al-A‘azz at the instigation of Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn al-Sal‘ūs (d. 693/1294), who despised the judge. Nevertheless, ‘Alī explained Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s misfortunes as simply “the recompense for his slandering the spiritual elect.”²³

‘Alī claimed that he was instrumental in Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s release from prison, after which he visited the judge to congratulate him for his exoneration. During this visit ‘Alī defended the propriety of his grandfather’s religious beliefs by reciting verses from the *al-Tā’īyah al-kubrā*, which warn against belief in a divine incarnation. Ibn Bint al-A‘azz apologized and asked God’s forgiveness for what he had said against Ibn al-Fāriq. Further, the judge claimed that he was a great admirer of the poet, whose *Diwān* he had memorized when he was a young man. ‘Alī then raised the issue of Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s argument with al-Aykī, and the judge answered:²⁴

Yes, I remained anxious from his curse until this oppression befell me. So I ask God most high to pardon me and him, and I turn in repentance to God most high for slandering the reputation of the folk of this way [i.e., the Sufis] for because of them this calamity befell me. I implore their blessings [*barakāt*] from God.

‘Alī added that Ibn Bint al-A‘azz left on pilgrimage to the Hijaz, where he humbly recited a beautiful poem in praise of Muhammad. When he returned to Cairo he found that many of his enemies had perished, and he was reinstated in the judgeship, a position he held until his death.

‘Alī’s account of Ibn Bint al-A‘azz and his personal crisis is intriguing. The verses critical of incarnation quoted by ‘Alī from his grandfather’s work appear to be in defense of the poet.²⁵ Yet the story as a whole, and especially in its wider context of this hagiography, suggests that its inclusion was not primarily to defend Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s beliefs but, rather, to demonstrate the dire consequences to be suffered by those who slander God’s elect. This is clearly ‘Alī’s interpretation of the events and consistent with his intent to commemorate his grandfather’s good name.

Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s fall from power was viewed differently, however, by those writing history and biography, and a comparison with these accounts highlights the style and goals of ‘Alī’s hagiography. Reference to the event may be found in several works, but the most detailed account is by Ibn al-Furāt (d. 807/1405) in his Mamluk history, *Ta’rīkh al-duwal wa-al-mulūk*.²⁶

According to this work, the argument occurred in 687/1288 shortly after Ibn Bint al-A‘azz was named vizier. Ibn al-Furāt noted that it was then customary for a new vizier to have a prayer rug unrolled for him at the al-Ṣalāḥīyah monastery; this represented the vizier’s status as a chief shaykh, a position he shared with the shaykh al-shuyūkh of the establishment.²⁷ Ibn Bint al-A‘azz sent a rug for this purpose to be unrolled as usual after the afternoon prayer in the presence of the residents of the monastery. This was done, and al-Aykī and all of the Sufis prepared to meet the new vizier, but he kept them waiting. Al-Aykī feared that he would miss his appointed hour for reading the Qur’ān, so he started to read it, and the Sufis followed the example of their leader.²⁸

Ibn al-Furāt stated that al-Aykī would not interrupt his reading for any reason or for anyone. Therefore, when Ibn Bint al-A‘azz arrived during the reading al-Aykī did not rise to meet him, nor did he break his concentration, and he continued to read seated, although the rest of the Sufis had stood up and gone to greet Ibn Bint al-A‘azz. This insult perturbed the vizier. After the Qur’ān reading, *dhikr* ceremony, and prayers, al-Aykī stood and greeted Ibn Bint al-A‘azz and then sat down.

Ibn al-Furāt said that a Sufi who was jealous of al-Aykī sensed the vizier’s displeasure, and he sat before Ibn Bint al-A‘azz, who was still the chief judge, in order to lodge a complaint against al-Aykī. Ibn Bint al-A‘azz called al-Aykī to stand next to his adversary that he might judge between them, but al-Aykī refused, saying that no quarrel existed. Ibn Bint al-A‘azz became furious. He rebuked al-Aykī and commanded that

all present take hold of al-Aykī and make an example of him. So they seized him and knocked off his turban. Al-Aykī then turned to Ibn Bint al-A‘azz and said, “You have made an example of me, so may God do likewise to you!” Al-Aykī’s curse increased the vizier’s anger, but he also grew fearful because of it.²⁹

Ibn al-Furāt’s account suggests that Ibn Bint al-A‘azz desired that the Sufis await his arrival in order to assert his authority and importance. Nevertheless, al-Aykī, as symbolic head of the Sufis, began his Qur’ān reading without the vizier and so stressed his own sovereignty in spiritual matters. Ibn Bint al-A‘azz hoped to check this presumed insolence by attempting to humble the shaykh to the status of the accused before the judge. But al-Aykī gave further insult when he denied Ibn Bint al-A‘azz his right of judicature by declaring the case nonexistent. Neither man sought compromise, not to mention cooperation on the matter of Sufi leadership. The vizier drove home his point with worldly power; the shaykh answered in otherworldly kind.

Two years after the argument Ibn Bint al-A‘azz held al-Aykī’s former position as shaykh al-shuyūkh.³⁰ No doubt, al-Aykī gave up his position in Cairo due to this disgrace by Ibn Bint al-A‘azz; one biographer noted that al-Aykī resigned as shaykh of the monastery and returned to Damascus because “the Sufis spoke ill of him.”³¹ But the fact that Ibn Bint al-A‘azz obtained the directorship of the al-Ṣalāhiyah monastery suggests that the quarrel between the two men was motivated by more mundane than religious concerns.

Senior religious scholars of this period customarily occupied a number of positions simultaneously, appointing substitutes for those duties that they were too busy to fulfill. Multiple posts could enhance one’s reputation and income, and it was not unusual for a chief judge to accrue substantial sums from nonjudicial duties. Accordingly, by 690/1291 Ibn Bint al-A‘azz held at least seventeen posts, including the judgeship and the position of shaykh al-shuyūkh, from which he secured a sizable income.³² It is quite possible, then, that Ibn Bint al-A‘azz used his leverage as chief judge and vizier—and perhaps the point of Ibn al-Fāriq’s religious beliefs—to undermine al-Aykī’s position at the monastery in order to assume it himself and eliminate a rival.

Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s wealth and influence, however, were also instrumental in his own undoing. In 689/1290 Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s patron, the sultan Qalā’ūn, died, and he was succeeded by his son al-Ashraf (d. 693/1294). The new sultan did not like Ibn Bint al-A‘azz because the judge had favored Qalā’ūn’s older son al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ over him.³³ Of added importance was the enmity al-Ashraf’s vizier Ibn al-Sal‘ūs harbored against Ibn

Bint al-A'azz and other members of Qalā'ūn's inner circle, for past indignities he had suffered.³⁴

The new vizier resolved to humble or eliminate all rivals whether they were Mamluks or religious scholars, like Ibn Bint al-A'azz, who was replaced as chief judge. So determined was Ibn al-Sal'ūs that, when there was an attempt to have Ibn Bint al-A'azz appointed judge in Damascus and thus allow him to retain some professional respect, the vizier arranged for individuals to testify before the sultan against the judge. The witnesses included a handsome youth who confessed to having committed sodomy with the accused, while others alleged that Ibn Bint al-A'azz was secretly a Christian and wore the *zunnār*, or sash marking a Christian, beneath his clothes.³⁵

In his defense Ibn Bint al-A'azz appealed to common sense, arguing that, while many of the charges were possible, the wearing of a *zunnār* was absurd, since the Christians had been forced to wear it prominently displayed in order to be distinguished from the Muslim majority; it was an odious badge to the Christians, who would dispose of it if they could.³⁶ But by the trial's end Ibn Bint al-A'azz was severely abused by Ibn al-Sal'ūs and was fined an enormous sum of money. The vizier wanted to beat him, but this was not allowed. Later the former judge was forced to ascend to the Citadel on foot while his guards rode, a disgrace for a person of Ibn Bint al-A'azz's status and an act that outraged a number of Mamluk amirs who were incredulous of the charges brought against him.³⁷

Still not satisfied, Ibn al-Sal'ūs held a session the next year in which Ibn Bint al-A'azz was again accused of disgusting behavior. This time Ibn Bint al-A'azz was imprisoned and threatened with execution. Yet, on the first of Ramaḍān, 692/1293, he was released from confinement and permitted to return to his residence in Cairo. Ibn Bint al-A'azz then composed a panegyric in praise of Ibn al-Sal'ūs, which he desired to read personally before the vizier. But Ibn al-Sal'ūs ordered another to recite it, and, obviously satisfied, the vizier cleared Ibn Bint al-A'azz of any wrongdoing.³⁸

Ibn Bint al-A'azz then left on pilgrimage, but, before he returned to Cairo in 693/1294, the sultan al-Ashraf and Ibn al-Sal'ūs were assassinated. Al-Nāṣir (684–741/1285–1341), the nine-year-old son of Qalā'ūn, was named sultan by the assassins, with the support of some of Qalā'ūn's trusted administrators. Shortly thereafter, Ibn Bint al-A'azz was reinstated by his old allies in all of the positions occupied by him in 689/1290, including that of chief judge, which he held until his death in 695/1296.³⁹

Ibn al-Furāt's account of Ibn Bint al-A'azz and his misfortunes contrasts sharply with that by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson, most notably concerning the matter of cause. Clearly, Ibn al-Furāt numbered the argument with al-

Aykī among the reasons for Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s fall from power. The vizier’s craving for worldly recognition and his desire to assert his religious superiority over the shaykh led to predictable consequences, for God protected those concerned only with Him. While Ibn al-Fāriḍ made no mention of Ibn al-Fāriḍ or his *al-Tā’īyah al-kubrā*, they may have been the source of the Sufi’s complaint against al-Aykī. Nevertheless, in his account al-Aykī—not Ibn al-Fāriḍ—is only one of several reasons for the vizier’s falling into the hands of the vindictive Ibn al-Sal‘ūs.

Although ‘Alī referred to Ibn al-Sal‘ūs and the trial, details of the events and the political rivalries involved are obscured in order to drive home a crucial point; Ibn Bint al-A‘azz had falsely accused Ibn al-Fāriḍ of heresy and so faced a similar charge as punishment. Further, ‘Alī gave only a general time frame—the end of Qalā’ūn’s reign—leaving the impression that the argument over the *al-Tā’īyah al-kubrā* between Ibn Bint al-A‘azz and al-Aykī took place immediately before the former’s persecution, when, in fact, nearly three years had passed. For ‘Alī political actions and their usual consequences were displaced by religious issues and the miraculous.

‘Alī mentioned that during his conversation with Ibn Bint al-A‘azz, the former judge confessed to having been very wrong about Ibn al-Fāriḍ; likewise, Ibn Bint al-A‘azz attributed the calamities that befell him to his slandering of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and not to political intrigue. Yet ‘Alī’s conversation with Ibn Bint al-A‘azz occurred soon after the judge’s release and before he made the pilgrimage. No doubt his recent imprisonment and the threat of execution had encouraged a religious frame of mind, one in which God worked in mysterious ways.

But, in addition, the overt cause for his calamities, Ibn al-Sal‘ūs, was still alive and powerful as vizier. Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s panegyric of the vizier and his undertaking the pilgrimage were two clear signs that he had submitted to the alignments of power and Ibn al-Sal‘ūs’s domination. That Ibn al-Sal‘ūs did not cause Ibn Bint al-A‘azz the added humiliation of reciting the panegyric and, later, permitted the judge’s exoneration from all charges indicate that the vizier no longer felt threatened by his former rival. In this light Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s apology for criticizing Ibn al-Fāriḍ and blaming himself—and not the sultan or his vizier—for his personal misfortunes may be seen as yet another proof offered to his oppressors that he would not press his claims to government or oppose their rule. Thus, Ibn Bint al-A‘azz’s acknowledgment of ‘Alī’s interpretation of the events and the judge’s apology for slandering the poet probably had their political dimension as well.⁴⁰

The Saint in Cairo and Mecca

‘Alī related his account of Ibn Bint al-A‘azz to uphold Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s saintly status, and in the next section of the *Dibājah* he went on to cite several examples of his grandfather’s mystical sensitivity and his ability to induce religious states in others.⁴¹ In one of these stories a group of guards passed by Ibn al-Fāriḍ while they were beating clappers and singing:

Oh master,
we stayed awake all night
wanting union with you.

Oh master,
you wouldn’t give it,
so we dreamed a phantom.

But master,
[the phantom] didn’t come—
you have forgotten us.

Upon hearing these verses, Ibn al-Fāriḍ shouted out and danced in the marketplace. This attracted a large crowd of people, many of whom fell to the ground in ecstasy as the guards continued to sing. Ibn al-Fāriḍ stripped off his outer garments, as did others with him, and gave them to the guards in gratitude for the state. The crowd then carried Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his underwear to the Azhar mosque, where he remained spiritually intoxicated for a number of days, “lying on his back wrapped like a corpse.” When Ibn al-Fāriḍ recovered the guards respectfully offered to return his clothes, but he refused to take them. As a result, some of the guards sold their portion of the garments for a large sum to the populace, while other guards kept the clothing and its blessing for themselves, a clear indication that they venerated Ibn al-Fāriḍ as a saintly man.⁴²

With similar stories ‘Alī offered proof of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s scrupulous dealings with the ruling elite, particularly the Ayyubid sultan Muhammad al-Malik al-Kāmil. This sultan patronized the arts and sciences, and his study sessions with scholars were well known. ‘Alī said that, during one such session, al-Malik al-Kāmil and a number of litterateurs were reciting and discussing verses ending with the vowelless “yā’,” a most difficult rhyme. No one could recite more than ten lines using the rhyme except the sultan, who had memorized fifty verses. After he recited them, however, his secretary, Sharaf al-Dīn, recalled that he knew an ode of one hundred and fifty lines rhyming in “yā’.” The sultan was amazed and commanded his secretary to recite the poem, which began:⁴³

Oh driver of the howdahs
 rolling up the perilous deserts,
 kindly turn aside
 at the sand dunes of Tāi.

Al-Malik al-Kāmil was delighted by the poem. Sharaf al-Dīn told him that this was a composition by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who resided at the Azhar. The sultan commanded his secretary:

Take one thousand of our dinars and go to him and say on my behalf, "Your son Muhammad greets you and requests that you accept this from him in the name of the mendicants who come to you." If he accepts it, ask him to attend us that we may take our share of his spiritual blessings [*barakah*].

The secretary asked to be excused from this task, since Ibn al-Fāriḍ never accepted gold or attended court. Were he to make such a request of the poet, Ibn al-Fāriḍ would banish the secretary from his presence, even though the latter represented the sultan himself. But the sultan was resolute, and so the secretary took the gold and went to the poet. Before Sharaf al-Dīn could speak, however, Ibn al-Fāriḍ scolded him, saying:

Oh Sharaf al-Dīn, what's with you that you mention my name
 in the sultan's court! Return the gold to him and don't come
 back to me for a year!

The secretary returned dispirited to the sultan and professed that he would rather die than not see the poet for a year. The sultan exclaimed, "There is a shaykh like this in my day, and I haven't visited him!" That night the sultan, accompanied by a group of his amirs, secretly went to the Azhar to visit Ibn al-Fāriḍ. But he sensed their presence, and, as they entered through the front gate, he left out the back for Alexandria.

Sometime later the sultan was informed that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had returned to Cairo, but in poor health. The sultan sent one of his amirs to ask Ibn al-Fāriḍ's permission to build a tomb for him under al-Shāfi'ī's dome and next to the grave of the sultan's mother. But Ibn al-Fāriḍ denied this request and another, which proposed the construction of a shrine especially for him. 'Alī added that, after rejecting these offers, his grandfather was amazingly restored to health.

In these stories al-Malik al-Kāmil is clearly portrayed as an admirer of both Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry and holiness, and he hoped to win the poet's favor and spiritual blessings through patronage. Further, the sultan's

request that Ibn al-Fāriḍ accept money on behalf of the mendicants who visited him and the sultan's suspension of royal prerogative when making this request suggest that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was highly esteemed.⁴⁴

Yet the poet rebuffed the sultan's attentions, no doubt to protect his religious life. For, while some Sufi authorities permitted pious people to associate with sultans and the ruling elite, they cautioned against flattery, pomposity, and, especially, moral compromise, since to accept a gift might be unlawful if its donor had acquired it illegally. The safest route in such matters, then, was to abstain from meeting with rulers or attending court, so as to guard one's piety and reputation.⁴⁵ Therefore, Ibn al-Fāriḍ refused the sultan's gifts, trusting, instead, in God, who healed him after he rejected offers for constructing his tomb.

These and related tales are intended to demonstrate the saintly Ibn al-Fāriḍ's attitude vis-à-vis wealth and worldly power but also to attest to his conscientious behavior, his morality, and his complete trust in God, the subjects of the following story. 'Alī claimed that his grandfather would keep consecutive forty-day fasts, neither eating, drinking, nor sleeping. On the last day of one such fast Ibn al-Fāriḍ was consumed by a craving for *harīṣah*, a kind of sweet pastry. He bought it and was about to eat it when the wall of a nearby shrine burst open and a handsome young man dressed in white emerged, saying "Shame on you!" Ibn al-Fāriḍ replied, "Yes, if I eat it!" and threw the sweet away before it touched his lips. Then he added an extra ten days to his fast.⁴⁶

This story affirms Ibn al-Fāriḍ's piety by noting that he regularly disciplined his physical constitution with supererogatory acts. Although he rigorously maintained his fasts, he too was susceptible to human nature and would have stumbled in this instance were it not for a vision, which preserved his good intention. Yet the vision itself was an additional proof of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's godliness, since such miracles were considered to be a grace from God for His chosen ones, special favors to help them and their faith.

There is an escalation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical insights and powers in the preceding stories, as the sensitive poet, enraptured by the hidden meanings of verse, evolves into an experienced shaykh to whom miracles occur. The common people revere his trances, while the rulers admire his poetry and his refusal to accept their patronage. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's position among the spiritual elect rises higher still in 'Alī's account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's meeting with the great Sufi Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234).⁴⁷

When the shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, the shaykh of the Sufis . . . was on pilgrimage . . . in the year 628 [1231],

many people from Iraq went on pilgrimage with him. He noticed a huge crowd of people around him during the circumambulation of the [the Ka'bah] and during the Standing at 'Arafāt, and he noticed their imitation of his words and actions.

It reached him that the shaykh [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] . . . was [there], so he longed to see him, and he wept, saying to himself, "Oh, do you think that God regards me as these folk do? Do you think that I am remembered in the presence of the Beloved today?"

Then the shaykh [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] . . . appeared to him and said, "Oh, al-Suhrawardī:

Good news for you,
so strip off what's on you,
for you've been remembered
despite your crookedness!

Then the shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn screamed and stripped off everything on him, and the shaykhs and the mendicants present did likewise. He looked for the shaykh [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] but could not find him, so he said, "This is news from one who was in the [Divine] Presence!"

This account leaves no doubt about the high regard held for Ibn al-Fāriḍ by his son and grandson, who subordinated Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī, one of the most famous Sufis of his own and later times, to Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Although the masses revered al-Suhrawardī to the extent that they imitated his every word and deed, they were ignorant of his inner struggle and misgivings. Ibn al-Fāriḍ knew, however, and so suddenly appeared to al-Suhrawardī with the happy news that God did indeed favor him despite his imperfections, a revelation Ibn al-Fāriḍ concealed in a verse of poetry. When al-Suhrawardī turned to reward the poet, he discovered that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had mysteriously vanished, giving rise to al-Suhrawardī's exclamation, "This is news from one who was in the [Divine] Presence!" This declaration is a fitting climax to the *Dibājah*, proclaiming Ibn al-Fāriḍ's deep mystical insight and the divine nature of his verse.

ʿAlī added that the two gnostics later met and talked in private. Al-Suhrawardī then asked permission to invest the poet's sons and two of their friends with the *khirqah*, or habit, of the al-Suhrawardīyah Sufi order (*ṭarīqah*). Ibn al-Fāriḍ refused saying, "This is not our way [*ṭarīqah*]." But al-Suhrawardī persisted and finally was allowed to present the youths with the habit of his order.

Again, al-Suhrawardī is dependent on Ibn al-Fāriḍ, yet what is of interest here is Ibn al-Fāriḍ's statement, "This is not our *ṭarīqah*," since there is little evidence that any Sufi order was organized around him during his lifetime. Perhaps, the term *ṭarīqah* should be taken to mean a Sufi "way" in general; thus, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as his son's spiritual master and that of two friends, saw no reason why they should be affiliated with anyone else. Ibn al-Fāriḍ may have relented, knowing well that investiture with the habit was frequently only a sign of favor without obligations.⁴⁸

Although Ibn al-Fāriḍ may have met with al-Suhrawardī during the pilgrimage, the story of the poet's sudden appearance to al-Suhrawardī with glad tidings from spiritual realms is questionable. For 'Alī's younger contemporary al-Fayyūmī relates a different account of events.⁴⁹ In his version a man named Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Wāsiṭī was told during his pilgrimage that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was in Mecca.⁵⁰ Al-Wāsiṭī waited for him at the Ka'bah so that he might hear some of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry and take it as an auspicious sign for his pilgrimage. The two met, and al-Wāsiṭī asked Ibn al-Fāriḍ to recite some of his verse. Ibn al-Fāriḍ obliged him, reciting the entire ode, whose final verse begins, "Good news for you." Overjoyed by the good omen contained in the last verses, al-Wāsiṭī stripped off his pilgrimage garments and gave them to the poet with thanks.

Al-Fayyūmī's less dramatic incident involving Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his verse would have been less appealing to 'Alī, the hagiographer, than the one involving the great Sufi al-Suhrawardī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ's superiority to him. Further, the version containing al-Suhrawardī and the issue of investiture may represent an attempt—perhaps by 'Alī—to organize a distinct order around Ibn al-Fāriḍ comparable to the order established by 'Umar al-Suhrawardī and his uncle Abū Najīb (490–563/1094–1169). Such a motive might also explain why 'Alī wrote his *Dibājah* in order to preserve and transmit his grandfather's miracles.

'Alī concluded his Meccan tales with a humorous story. Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his son Kamāl al-Dīn were present at the Ka'bah to witness the "Night of Power" (Laylat al-qadr), which occurs between the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh of Ramaḍān. Ibn al-Fāriḍ would keep a total fast during the holy month and pass his nights in prayer, awaiting this special night. On its eve Kamāl al-Dīn was leaving the sacred precinct to relieve himself, when he saw the Ka'bah, the houses of Mecca, and the mountains prostrating to God, while the sky shone with bright lights. Terrified, he ran to his father and told him what he had witnessed. Ibn al-Fāriḍ shouted out to those present, "This son of mine went out to piss and saw the Night of Power!" Everyone yelled and then prayed and circumambulated the Ka'bah. The next morning Ibn al-Fāriḍ left in a daze and did not return for several days.⁵¹

Last Days

Events return to Cairo in the final section of the *Dibājah*, which focuses on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death and burial. 'Alī noted that his grandfather enjoyed visiting a mosque on the island of Rodah to watch the Nile when it was high. One day, on the way to the mosque, Ibn al-Fāriḍ passed a fuller, who was beating and cutting a piece of cloth on the rocks while singing:

This piece of cloth
has shattered my heart,
but it's not pure
until it's shredded!

Hearing this, Ibn al-Fāriḍ swooned, and he repeated the verse hour after hour, at times falling to the ground, until the state finally subsided. He revealed spiritual mysteries to his son, and then the ecstasy returned. Seeing his condition, a companion recited:

I die when I remember you,
then I'm revived—
how often I'm revived for you,
how many times I've died!

Ibn al-Fāriḍ jumped up and hugged his friend, who refused to repeat the verse for fear of further agitating the poet. Again, ecstasy overwhelmed Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and he said:

If God seals
with His forgiveness,
then all that I suffer
will be easy.

He died a short time later.⁵²

The verses in this story draw parallels between bodily death and a mystical one. The unyielding cloth frustrating the fuller's efforts probably represents the obstinate *nafs*, the mystic's concupiscence, or self-will, which must be controlled and disciplined or all will be lost. This realization spurred Ibn al-Fāriḍ to greater self-sacrifice and, hence, to greater spiritual truths, which he related to his son. At last Ibn al-Fāriḍ attained his ultimate desire of self-annihilation and spiritual resurrection before the divine beloved. Bereft of self and pride, Ibn al-Fāriḍ hoped only for forgiveness.

This short poetic record of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death is followed by a much

longer account, also related to 'Alī by his uncle. In this case, however, the witness is not the poet's son but, rather, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Ja'barī (599–687/1202–88), who recalled his experiences at the time of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death and funeral. Interestingly, neither 'Alī nor his uncle claimed to have confirmed the details with al-Ja'barī himself.⁵³

Al-Ja'barī's adventure began as he was wandering near the Euphrates contemplating the topic of spiritual annihilation (*fanā'*). A man suddenly appeared to him like a lightning bolt and said:⁵⁴

For you never loved me
so long as you
aren't annihilated in me,
And you aren't annihilated
so long as my form
is not revealed in you.

Al-Ja'barī immediately recognized the verse as an inspired answer to his meditation, and he learned from the mysterious stranger that the verse belonged to Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who was on the verge of death in Cairo. The two men turned toward Egypt, followed the poet's fragrance, and arrived in the nick of time. Ibn al-Fāriḍ greeted al-Ja'barī by name, though they had never met, and said, "Sit down and be glad for you are among the saints of God." This news overjoyed al-Ja'barī, who asked Ibn al-Fāriḍ how he knew this. Ibn al-Fāriḍ replied that he had requested from God that a group of saints attend his death and funeral, and so al-Ja'barī's presence was a confirmation of his sainthood.

Al-Ja'barī then inquired from the other saints present if it was possible for anyone to knowingly comprehend God. No one answered except Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who said that, if God encompassed the person, then that person could comprehend Him. Al-Ja'barī said that at this point paradise appeared to the poet, who changed color and cried out:⁵⁵

If my resting place
in love near you
is what I've seen,
then I wasted my life.
A desire
seized my soul for a time,
but now it seems
just a jumbled dream.

Al-Ja'barī praised Ibn al-Fāriḍ's attainment of paradise, but the poet countered:

Oh Ibrāhīm, Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawīyah said—and she was a woman—“By Your power! I did not worship You for fear of Your fire or in desire of Your paradise, rather in honor of Your noble countenance and for love of You!” So this station [of seeing paradise] is not what I sought or passed my life in traveling to.⁵⁶

Ibn al-Fāriḍ then told al-Ja‘barī to stay at the grave for three days to see what would happen. Al-Ja‘barī suddenly heard a voice—though he saw no one—say, “Oh ‘Umar, what do you desire?” To which Ibn al-Fāriḍ replied:⁵⁷

I desire—though time has passed—
one glance from you,
but, oh, how much blood will flow
before I reach my goal.

When Ibn al-Fāriḍ spoke these words his face shone like the moon, and he smiled. Then al-Ja‘barī said, “He expired happily, and I knew that he had been given his desire.”

Al-Ja‘barī attended the funeral, which, he said, attracted a multitude of people and green and white birds. It took the entire day, however, to dig the grave. Some people believed this to be a chastisement of Ibn al-Fāriḍ for claiming a high station in mystical love, while others maintained that it was a sign of saintship and the worldly deprivations that it entailed. Finally, the body was laid to rest, and al-Ja‘barī prayed over it. During the prayer he received a vision in which he saw the prophetic spirit of Muhammad (*al-rūḥ al-Muḥammadīyah*) and the spirits of the prophets, the angels, and the saints of humanity and the jinn all praying with him over Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Al-Ja‘barī concluded:⁵⁸

I stayed there [at the grave] three days and three nights,
witnessing of his state what your intellects could not bear.
Then I returned to [Iraq]. . . .

Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s holiness and saintliness are never in doubt throughout al-Ja‘barī’s adventure. As in ‘Alī’s first account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s death, this story, too, links the poet’s physical death to a mystical one, which Ibn al-Fāriḍ achieves at last. Further, Ibn al-Fāriḍ proves his sainthood when his requests of God are fulfilled and by his ability to answer al-Ja‘barī’s question about gnosis. The birds hovering above the bier and the holy spirits that prayed over it are added testimony to prove his elect status as a true lover of God.

Yet there remains a glaring discrepancy between the two accounts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death; both were related by his son Kamāl al-Dīn. Either he was present during his father's illness and death, thus giving some credence to the first story, or he was absent when his father died, allowing for the possibility that al-Ja'barī was there, though the tale ascribed to him is indeed fantastic. 'Alī, however, comfortably preserved both reports, since each one paid homage to his grandfather.

Undoubtedly, the incredible events in al-Ja'barī's adventure create a supernatural aura around Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death and passage into the next world, and certain elements in the account mirror those in the story of the greengrocer's death and burial.⁵⁹ In fact, the greengrocer's story and al-Ja'barī's report of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's death are meant to represent, in the first instance, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's status as a living saint on earth and, in the second, his relinquishing of this position to al-Ja'barī, his successor whom he declared to be a saint. By placing these stories at the beginning and end of the *Dībājah*, respectively, 'Alī could declare his grandfather's sainthood without being explicit.

For 'Alī and his uncle never called Ibn al-Fāriḍ a saint (*walī*) or said that he was invested with sainthood (*walāyah/wilāyah*). Probably such claims for a close relative would have been considered unseemly, if not blatantly nepotistic. 'Alī did organize his *Dībājah* in such a way, however,—by creating parallels, recording favorable opinions by nonrelatives, and, most important, recounting Ibn al-Fāriḍ's miracles (*karāmāt*) and meetings with other mystics—to leave the unmistakable impression that his grandfather should be numbered among God's elect.

As a sort of postscript, 'Alī noted that al-Ja'barī and other learned men made pilgrimages to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grave to pay their respects, and he added his grandfather's birth and death dates.⁶⁰ Finally, 'Alī concluded his *Dībājah* with a long prayer for mystical enlightenment, preceded by this statement:⁶¹

I have been silent regarding mention of dubious extraordinary states, fearing base criticism and disbelief. . . . I have made [this preface to the *Dirwān*] as an enlightenment for the lovers and a memorial after me for the sons, of the glorious deeds of the fathers and grandfathers. I ask God most high that He help me and them to travel His paths, and that He grant us good and blessed progeny. I give permission to the sons to relate [the work] from me with its chain, as I linked hearing it, [to the shaykh] via his son. I advise those who read it and ascend its stairs, that they hold fast to the *Nāẓm al-sulūk* and lead a devout life by its way.

‘Alī’s assurance that only reliable, believable stories had been related may seem amusing to modern readers skeptical about the possibility of miracles. To a citizen of Mamluk Egypt, however, the events narrated by ‘Alī were quite possible, though in some cases extraordinary. An individual living in the fourteenth century might have doubted a given story or denied that a certain individual had been granted a miracle, but not the possibility of miracles per se. God was believed to suspend the normal custom of things in order to achieve His ends, and, frequently, He did this by means of His chosen few. ‘Alī’s reliable stories, then, are probably those that had been transmitted directly to him from his uncle or from known individuals such as al-Ja‘barī. This direct transmission helped to sustain the stories’ credibility, as did ‘Alī’s plain factual style and his specific references to the persons, places, and dates involved.

These factors help to account for the *Dībājah*’s popularity among later generations who were interested in Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s life and poetry. But also important to the work’s dissemination was ‘Alī’s written authorization permitting readers of good intentions to transmit it. By placing this authorization in the work itself, ‘Alī encouraged the study and spread of its contents. The numerous later accounts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ based on the *Dībājah* would prove the success of ‘Alī’s intentions.

Controversy

The Sufi Poet

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Ibn al-Fāriḍ became a major topic of debate among Cairo's educated classes. Conflicting opinions expressed earlier about him and his poetry were codified and in some cases elaborated. At the same time a wide range of issues and interests began to coalesce around the poet, producing several controversies that reveal some of the religious, intellectual, and social tensions of the period.

Writers favorable to the poet and having strong literary inclinations focused on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetic talents. These historians and litterateurs spoke highly of Ibn al-Fāriḍ as a mystical poet, but they related few of the amazing stories about him. Rather, they cited examples of his refined verse and praised his poetic intuition and rhetorical skills. In fact, according to the famous biographer and literary scholar al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), Ibn al-Fāriḍ's impressive craftsmanship was a primary cause for misunderstanding his poetry. Few individuals were qualified to read this difficult, if beautiful, verse, and many readers failed to grasp Ibn al-Fāriḍ's subtle use of double entendre (*tawriyah*) and the mystical allusions concealed within the poems' erotic imagery.¹ A later historian, al-Fayyūmī, cited Ibn al-Fāriḍ's risqué colloquial verses about a butcher boy as an example of morally questionable literal meanings masking deeper spiritual truths:

I said to a butcher: "I love you,
but oh how you cut and kill me!"
He said: "That's my business,
so you scold me?"

He bent to kiss my foot to win me,
but he wanted my slaughter,
so he breathed on me
to skin me.

Not finding these verses in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān*, al-Fayyūmī asked his companion, 'Alī, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grandson, about them. 'Alī declared them genuine, adding this interpretation:²

[My grandfather] was addressing Satan by means of double entendre. Satan occupies the place of the butcher, and [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] addresses him and concupiscence [*nafs*], which is enticed by flattery and preyed upon by temptation until the animal passions conquer, and one falls into the destruction of misery.

Yet, for another literary writer, al-Udfuwī (d. 748/1347), the fine love imagery that dominates Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse was not the product of the poet's technical expertise but, rather, an outpouring of his effusive passion. As evidence, al-Udfuwī claimed that Ibn al-Fāriḍ loved absolute beauty in any form, human or otherwise, to the extent that he fell in love with a camel. Mystical ecstasy is the inferred cause for this extraordinary behavior, and new hagiographies would continue to focus on the ecstatic dimensions of an enraptured poet.³

Clearly under the influence of 'Alī's *Dibājah*, several authors of the period concentrated on stories of Ibn al-Fāriḍ as the pious saint. Al-Yāfi'ī (698–768/1297–1367), one of the most popular Arab hagiographers, gave a long account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, praising the poet's inspired verse and the spiritual meanings invoked by its sensual imagery. Like the *Dibājah*, this hagiography was selected and arranged to elicit feelings of awe and reverence on behalf of the mystical poet. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's miracles and superb Sufi poetry were signs of God's favor, and al-Yāfi'ī reverently reported them to strengthen Sufism's mass appeal and to refute its detractors.⁴

Similarly, the hagiographer Ibn al-Mulaqqin (723–804/1323–1401) numbered Ibn al-Fāriḍ among the saints of his generation,⁵ while the Mamluk historian Ibn Duqmāq (750–809/1349–1406) devoted a number of pages in his history of Egypt to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's miracles, quoting verbatim almost the entire *Dibājah*.⁶ Although these hagiographies tell us little that is new about Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and work, they do indicate that tales of his saintly life and miracles were becoming more widespread.

Guidebooks for pilgrimage to the Qarāfah cemetery also point toward Ibn al-Fāriḍ's rising popularity as both a poet and a saint, and references to him in these guides usually combine the praises of litterateurs with the hagiographers' wondrous tales.⁷ In his extensive study of the Qarāfah, Ibn al-Zayyāt (d. 805/1402) praised the sanctity of the poet and his grave, which he used as a reference point for other structures at the foot of Mt.

Muqaṭṭam. That is, he located a given grave, tomb, or mosque in the area by its position vis-à-vis Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grave, implying that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was the source of spiritual blessings (*barakah*) in the precinct.⁸ For many in Cairo Ibn al-Fāriḍ was unquestionably a saint.

New Critics

But for others Ibn al-Fāriḍ was not even a good Muslim, let alone a saint. Alarmed by monism's popularity, the poet's literary repute, and his growing saintly notoriety, a number of religious scholars took issue with his verse. The most articulate and influential of these new critics was the noted historian, *ḥadīth* scholar, and theologian al-Dhahabī (673–748/1274–1348). Following Ibn Taymiyah, al-Dhahabī cited Ibn al-Fāriḍ on four separate occasions for propagating monistic doctrines, including the possibility of mystical union between God and His creatures:⁹

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, poet of the time [*waqt*] . . . an adherent of unification [*ittiḥād*] with which he filled the *al-Tāʾrīyah*. . . . If there is no explicit monism in that ode—and who can doubt its presence—then there is no heresy in the world or any straying from the right path!

Al-Dhahabī was particularly concerned that unwary readers would be seduced by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's beautiful poetry and so led to perdition:¹⁰

In his poetry, he bleats with blatant monism, and this is a great misfortune. So reflect upon his verse and don't rush—but have a good opinion of the Sufis—for his [poetry] is naught but the garb of Sufis and general indications beneath which is philosophy and vipers! So, I have warned you.

But these references to Ibn al-Fāriḍ reveal an ambivalence that al-Dhahabī shared with many other critics of the poet; on the one hand, they detested what they believed to be the poetry's content, monism, while, on the other hand, they admired the poet's intricate and exquisite verse:¹¹

His *Dīwān* is famous, and it is of great beauty and subtlety, perfection and burning desire. Except that he adulterated it with explicit monism, in the sweetest of expressions and subtlest metaphors, like pastry laced with venom!

The power and popularity of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse were noted by other critics, including the Sufi poet Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ḥajalah (725–76/1325–75). While believing Ibn al-Fāriḍ to have been misled by monism, Ibn Abī Ḥajalah still regarded the poet as a sincere, though wayward, lover of God, and he too praised the *Dīwān*.¹²

It is one of the quickest to wound the hearts, and absolutely one of the best in lamentation since it was drawn from the outpourings of heartache, from a forsaken lover and a heart broken by the fever of separation. The people are fond of its rhymes and its intensity. He has become so popular that few are those who have not seen his *Dīwān*, or have not had his resounding odes ringing in their ears.

This respect for the *Dīwān* helps to explain Ibn Abī Ḥajalah's concerted efforts to undermine Ibn al-Fāriḍ's religious and literary influence, by composing his own poems using the same rhymes and meters as in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's collection. No doubt, Ibn Abī Ḥajalah hoped that his poems, purged of all questionable content, would replace Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse, but his imitations lacked the vigor of their originals. Instead of wide public praise, Ibn Abī Ḥajalah earned the scorn and ridicule of a powerful chief judge, Sirāj al-Dīn al-Hindī (714–73/1314–72), who defended Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his poem the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*. But Ibn Abī Ḥajalah held his ground until his death, and he was buried with his collection of religiously correct verse.¹³

A later chief judge, the renowned historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), favored a more direct approach when confronting Ibn al-Fāriḍ's popular poetry. In a legal opinion Ibn Khaldūn called for the destruction of the majority of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse, al-Fārghānī's commentary on the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, and other monistic works in order to preserve "the common good of the community."¹⁴ Another critic, al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Ahdal (d. 855/1451), offered a less radical solution. He recommended that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* be read, but only to recognize the corruption of the monists and for refutation. As for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's other odes, Ibn al-Ahdal compared them to works by the infidel pre-Islamic Arab poets; although reading such verse was permissible, it was better left alone, since it could mislead the ignorant and stir up strife.¹⁵

And there was strife, usually caused by the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, which even one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's admirers, al-Udfuwī, described as "giving signs of wicked affairs."¹⁶ Involved in several disputes about the ode was the very distinguished Muslim scholar, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852/1372–1449). Heavily influenced by al-Dhahabī's writings, Ibn Ḥajar became an

outspoken critic of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Not only did he compose a long polemical biography of the poet, but he went so far as to challenge one of his own teachers on the issue of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's religious beliefs:¹⁷

I asked our shaykh, the imām, Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī, about Ibn al-ʿArabī, and he snapped the answer that he was an infidel. So I asked him about Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and he said, "I don't like to talk about him."

I said, "What is the difference between the two of them, [their] position being the same?" And I recited to him from the *al-Tāʾīyah*, but he cut me off after the recitation of a number of verses by saying, "This is infidelity, this is infidelity!"

Al-Bulqīnī had no reservations about denouncing Ibn al-ʿArabī, but he tried to evade the question of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's infidelity. When pressed he censured a poem but not the poet. Ibn Ḥajar's good friend, however, the Mālikī judge Muhammad al-Bisāṭī (760–842/1359–1439), explicitly charged Ibn al-Fāriḍ with infidelity in his commentary on the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*. Although the work is lost, surviving quotations from it are critical of monism and mystical union, and, in one passage, al-Bisāṭī likened Sufi poets such as Ibn al-Fāriḍ to an epileptic woman with a talking jinni in her head.¹⁸ Yet, despite his negative opinion of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, al-Bisāṭī was criticized by other opponents of the poet, and an altercation ensued.

In 831/1428 the very respected Ḥanafī scholar and Sufi Muhammad al-Bukhārī (779–841/1377–1438) declared Ibn al-ʿArabī, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and others espousing unificationist doctrines to be infidels. He did this during one of his teaching sessions attended by al-Bisāṭī, who, in a display of his skills in argumentation, challenged al-Bukhārī. Al-Bisāṭī maintained that outwardly objectionable expressions might, in fact, be impeccable if interpreted within their proper technical contexts. Yet al-Bukhārī would not allow such interpretation (*taʾwīl*); al-Bisāṭī disagreed. Al-Bukhārī got angry, pronounced al-Bisāṭī an infidel, and demanded his dismissal from the Mālikī judgeship. He swore that if the sultan Bars Bāy (r. 825–41/1422–38) did not relieve al-Bisāṭī from his post, then he would leave Egypt. Although most of the scholars present at the session agreed with al-Bukhārī's position against the unificationists, some, like Ibn Ḥajar, felt that he should have been more restrained in his declarations of infidelity. On the advice of Ibn Ḥajar, al-Bisāṭī left the session to avert a worsening of the conflict.¹⁹

Hoping to muster support against his adversary, al-Bisāṭī went to

another well-known Ḥanafī scholar and Sufi, Muhammad ibn al-Humām (790–861/1388–1457), for his view of the matter. Al-Bisāṭī presented Ibn al-Humām with a copy of his commentary on the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, requesting a written opinion on the work. But, to al-Bisāṭī's dismay, Ibn al-Humām declared the commentary to be a figment of the imagination.²⁰

Worse still, word of the dispute reached the sultan Bars Bāy who called his judges together to resolve the problem. During this meeting the chief judge, Ibn Ḥajar, conferred with al-Bisāṭī, who cleared himself of supporting the unificationists by pronouncing their infidelity. Ibn Ḥajar then informed the sultan that this was sufficient and that al-Bisāṭī need not be dismissed from office. The meeting was adjourned. The sultan next tried to pacify al-Bukhārī, and he asked him to retract his oath, but al-Bukhārī was adamant that al-Bisāṭī be dismissed. Bars Bāy would not be coerced, and so al-Bukhārī left Egypt in anger.²¹

Similar to Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz's argument with al-Aykī, this dispute involved professional rivalries and reputations, and, once again, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* was a point of central concern. While the parties in this case were at odds regarding the interpretation of such poetry, both agreed that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was an infidel. Yet neither al-Bisāṭī nor even al-Bukhārī went so far as Ibn Khaldūn in calling for the total destruction of the ode. Though suspicious of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's intent and at times shocked by his bold poetic statements, many of his opponents grudgingly expressed their admiration for the literary qualities of his verse and, perhaps with a touch of envy, for his popularity as a poet and pious man.

Barqūq

As for the Mamluk ruling elite, several of them openly venerated Ibn al-Fāriḍ, providing religious endowments for the erection of a shrine around his grave. These and other amirs who built and patronized tombs and shrines did so to gain religious legitimacy and popular support as well as to insure the financial security of their loved ones, who usually administered the endowments. But some Mamluks also may have felt uneasy about their earthly behavior and divine recompense, and, so, their personal and material attentions to saints, shrines, and tombs should also be seen as an investment in the spiritual world, an attempt to buy saintly protection on earth and intercession in the hereafter.²²

A Mamluk named Timur al-Ibrāhīmī seems to have been the first major benefactor of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grave, and he bequeathed revenues to pay for a shrine with an attendant, a Sufi hostel (*zāwīyah*), and for the celebration of the poet's *mawlid*, or "saint's day." Before his death Timur appointed

his protégé, the Mamluk Barqūq al-Nāṣirī (d. 877/1472), as overseer of the endowments.²³ At that time Barqūq was a lesser amir of the third class. But in 867/1463 he became head of the sultan Khushqadam's guard, and, in 872/1467, he was appointed *shādd al-sharābkhānāh*, or "superintendent of the commissary," which placed him in charge of foods at the Citadel. This raised him to the rank of amir of the second class. During the next year the new sultan Tāmurbughā (r. 872/1467–68) relied on Barqūq and some other Mamluk amirs for support, but Barqūq sided with Qā'it Bāy and helped to insure the latter's investiture as sultan that year.²⁴

Both Qā'it Bāy and Barqūq had been manumitted by the sultan Jaqmaq, and this made them *khushdash*, companions in slavery and manumission. Usually, *khushdash* retained strong bonds of loyalty to their fellows after liberation. Invariably, a new sultan relied on his *khushdash* to gain and hold sovereignty at the beginning of his rule and until such time that his own Mamluks could be adequately trained to assume power. It is no wonder, then, that Qā'it Bāy rewarded Barqūq for his support, by raising him to amir of the first class in 873/1469.²⁵

Barqūq continued to be one of Qā'it Bāy's most dependable amirs during the early years of this sultan's reign, which were plagued by unsuccessful military campaigns and severe financial crises. When Qā'it Bāy assumed the sultanate, the treasury was empty, though money was urgently needed to finance the military campaigns against Shāh Suvār (d. 876/1471), the Ottoman backed ruler of Albistān. A few months after taking office, Qā'it Bāy left the Citadel unannounced, accompanied by one third of his army, but by only one of his elite amirs, Barqūq. The sultan, Barqūq, and the troops quickly rode through Egypt's delta, extorting "gifts" from the people and plundering the villages of money and movable property in an attempt to raise revenues.

The expedition lasted for more than a month, during which time lawlessness was said to have prevailed, while food prices rose, and plague ravaged the urban centers. Qā'it Bāy made no effort to enforce the law or to suppress the bedouin raids in the delta, though he did promise the people that he would appoint Barqūq as an inspector to investigate. When Qā'it Bāy returned to Cairo with his newly acquired wealth, he further honored Barqūq by allowing him to carry the royal parasol and falcon during the entry procession.²⁶

Although Qā'it Bāy had temporarily replenished his treasury, because of his careless commanders and their undisciplined troops, his first two expeditions against Shāh Suvār were disasters. In his attempts to finance another campaign Qā'it Bāy also confiscated sums of money from the religious scholars, and he cut their wages and annulled arrears owed to them.²⁷

Meanwhile, Barqūq was having great success against the bedouins in the eastern delta. In 874/1469 he sent the sultan nearly two hundred and fifty horses, which he had captured from the rebellious bedouin, along with a number of prisoners. Barqūq's victories helped to stabilize the domestic front, and they must have pleased Qā'it Bāy, who sought to consolidate his power and prolong his rule. Although Barqūq served the sultan as an investigator and commander, he continued to care for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb, over which he had a dome erected. This was yet another sign of the increasing prosperity enjoyed by the shrine, which continued to attract mendicants and the poor, who, during these years of great hardship, were fed there free of charge.²⁸

The Controversy

It was at this time, in the years 874–75/1469–70, when prices soared, chickens and wheat became scarce, and the people ate bread made of millet and sorghum, that the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy arose and spread among Cairo's religious elite. The dispute was sparked by a public reading of al-Farghānī's commentary on the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā*. Some religious scholars were disgusted by Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem and al-Farghānī's monistic commentary on it, and they wrote legal opinions denouncing the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and Ibn al-Fāriḍ's application of the feminine gender to God.²⁹

Those opposed to Ibn al-Fāriḍ included the chief Ḥanafī judge, Ibn al-Shihnah (804–90/1401–85); his son 'Abd al-Barr (851–921/1447–1515); the chief Ḥanbalī judge, ascetic, and Sufi, 'Izz al-Dīn al-Kinānī (800–876/1397–1471); and the Shāfi'ī jurisprudent and *ḥadīth* scholar Ibn Imām al-Kāmiliyah (808–74/1406–69). The famous biographer of this period Muhammad al-Sakhāwī (831–902/1427–97) noted that Ibn Imām al-Kāmiliyah usually minded his own business and avoided disputes but that he gave an opinion on the matter of Ibn al-Fāriḍ to placate the entreaties of the Shāfi'ī scholar Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī (809–85/1407–80). By far the most venom of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's critics, al-Biqā'ī wrote a refutation of the poet, the *Ṣawāb al-jawāb*, which fanned the fires of controversy.³⁰

Al-Biqā'ī opened the *Ṣawāb* with a quotation of thirty verses from the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* which some scholars believed were literally opposed to Islamic law and belief. He followed this with a series of rhetorical questions regarding the content and intention of the verses, the permissibility of their interpretation (*ta'wīl*), opinions by ancient and modern scholars on Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his verse and the permissibility of refuting them, and questions concerning Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters, their beliefs and technical language.

Al-Biqā'ī explicitly stated his position at the beginning of his answer to these questions. He declared the doctrines of incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and unification (*ittiḥād*) to be infidelity, along with any statement that contradicted the literal meaning of the Qur'ān or the custom of the prophet Muḥammad; adherents of these doctrines and those who made heretical statements were infidels. Al-Biqā'ī went on to say that the scholars of the past had comprehensive knowledge concerning proper religious doctrines and creeds and, so, should not be contradicted. As members of the pious forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), these scholars were morally superior to later generations; their opinions against Ibn al-Fāriḍ were also more reliable because they were more familiar with his case, having lived closer to his time.³¹

Al-Biqā'ī also disallowed metaphorical readings of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry. Citing the opinions of al-Ghazzālī and others, al-Biqā'ī maintained that any statement that literally contradicted Islamic law was forbidden, regardless of those who pleaded symbolism, metaphor, or technical terminology as an excuse.³² Open declaration of infidelity must be regarded as such, and symbolism, metaphor, and technical terminology could not be sound if they violated the law; heretical works should be publicly condemned and burned.

Al-Biqā'ī charged Ibn al-Fāriḍ and al-Farghānī with destroying the basis of Islamic law through their adherence to a belief in absolute unity, which annulled the separation between the Creator and His creation. Being familiar with doctrines of incarnation and mystical union, al-Biqā'ī distinguished among the Christians, the Shī'ah, others who allowed the possibility of God assuming whatever form He desired, and those Sufis who denied both doctrines on the grounds that there was no duality or differentiation in reality and, therefore, no possibility of incarnation or union. Al-Biqā'ī found this last monistic position absolutely absurd. He then quoted twelve verses from the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* to demonstrate Ibn al-Fāriḍ's affinity with these beliefs, and he stated that, while Ibn al-Fāriḍ may have freed himself from charges of incarnationism, he could not deny his adherence to monism, as found in Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings. This was clear infidelity.

Al-Biqā'ī next censured those who attempted to defend Ibn al-Fāriḍ as a saint, noting that bona fide saints had refuted such claims regarding him: if anyone was a saint, it was the trustworthy religious scholar and not someone like Ibn al-Fāriḍ, whose creed was suspected by many. Then al-Biqā'ī cited the names of over thirty scholars who he claimed had charged Ibn al-Fāriḍ with heresy. With his list of authorities al-Biqā'ī was certain of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's infidelity and that of the poet's supporters. He warned those who wished to quiet the controversy that they should

listen to the great scholars of the past and to the Qurʾān, which called true Muslims to defend their faith. What was morally suspect must be suppressed, and especially the heretical doctrines of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn al-ʿArabī, which denied the validity of the law and led to immorality. Already this had happened in Yemen, where, he said, mosques were converted into taverns and riffraff assumed religious leadership.³³

Al-Biqāʿī went on to rule against those who praised Ibn al-Fāriḍ or others who had been rebuked by the religious authorities. These apologists were to him, infidels, heretics, or ignoramuses—which was certainly the case of those who copied or favorably commented on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry. Al-Biqāʿī added that those who did not openly declare Ibn al-Fāriḍ's infidelity and call for the suppression of his verse stood in opposition to true Muslims.³⁴

Following a substantial conclusion, in which he reiterated his charges against Ibn al-Fāriḍ, al-Biqāʿī ended the *Ṣawāb* with a critique of those who permitted the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of statements that clearly contradicted the religious law and accepted doctrine. If such interpretations were allowed, no one could be charged with infidelity, not even the Jews and Christians, and morality would be destroyed. Individuals who made such interpretations and those who did not actively oppose Ibn al-Fāriḍ and those like him were accomplices in spreading corruption among society. In al-Biqāʿī's view heretics like Ibn al-Fāriḍ were worse than thieves and highway robbers, for, whereas the latter deprive people of their material goods, the former destroy the spiritual good of the community by leading Muslims astray.³⁵

After issuing his *Ṣawāb al-jawāb*, al-Biqāʿī composed another refutation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his commentators, which included more pronouncements against them by their opponents.³⁶ Al-Biqāʿī's persistent reference in these works to the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of Muslim scholars and to lists of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's critics leaves the impression that few responsible Muslims accepted the poet. But such was not the case, as is evident from the number of legal opinions and treatises written at this time in support of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and against his critics—most notably against al-Biqāʿī, who had offended a number of scholars with his condemnation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters.³⁷

Over a dozen of al-Biqāʿī's colleagues publicly defended Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and at least three of them wrote refutations specifically aimed at the *Ṣawāb*.³⁸ The Ḥanafī Sufi Badr al-Dīn Ibn al-Ghars (833–94/1429–88) argued in his refutation that enlightened gnostics like Ibn al-Fāriḍ had access to a unique, certain vision (*kashf*). This gnosis was beyond the range of reason and the intellect, and those who blindly followed their own intellectual tradition—be it a specific theological or legal school or

something else—were veiled from this deep mystical knowledge. Ibn al-Ghars was amazed that scholars who dealt with speculative arts and sciences and who disagreed among themselves could criticize the gnostics and their experiential knowledge derived from union with the divine. Literalists could not even begin to imagine this profound experience, not to mention judge the sayings and writings of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and other genuine saints.

Based on this general defense, Ibn al-Ghars refuted al-Biqā'ī's opinions one by one and criticized his use of authorities, particularly on the permissibility of interpretation (*ta'wīl*), which Ibn al-Ghars deemed requisite for a proper grasp of the poet's penetrating spiritual insights. Not only was Ibn al-Fāriḍ innocent of all charges brought against him, but he was also a great saint, whose *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* must be read and whose grave should be visited.³⁹

A similar stance was assumed by the renowned Muslim scholar al-Suyūṭī (839–911/1445–1505). Though never mentioning al-Biqā'ī by name, al-Suyūṭī attacked his misreading of sources and defended the scholars' right of interpretation. Further, al-Suyūṭī was very critical of those persons, like al-Dhahabī, who had censured Ibn al-Fāriḍ centuries after his death, since the poet had received only praise from his students and other contemporaries, including the great Sufi 'Umar al-Suhrawardī. Al-Suyūṭī advised his readers to honor Ibn al-Fāriḍ and God's other saints because, he said, the narrow-minded people who oppose them only hurt themselves.⁴⁰

Al-Biqā'ī responded to these refutations of his *Ṣawāb* by writing a counter-refutation of Ibn Ghars. Holding fast to his previous authoritarian and literalist positions, al-Biqā'ī accused Ibn al-Ghars of unconscionable lies and adherence to doctrines of unification, and so he charged him and his allies with infidelity.⁴¹

The Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy raged for over seven months, during which time al-Biqā'ī, Ibn al-Shiḥnah, and others opposed to Ibn al-Fāriḍ gained the support of the very popular Sufi, Ibrāhīm al-Matbulī (d. 877/1472). Al-Matbulī claimed to have been spiritually guided by the prophet Muhammad himself, and he was affiliated with the rural-oriented Aḥmādīyah order. Although he seems to have maintained reasonably good relations with more educated religious scholars, al-Matbulī was accused by some of sleeping with boys; he never married.

Much of al-Matbulī's fame came from his farm and Sufi hostel located near Cairo. As shaykh and overseer, al-Matbulī distributed bread and fodder to followers and visitors, and, when food prices soared in Qā'it Bāy's reign, this Sufi freely fed many people. This increased al-Matbulī's

popularity among the common people, but he was also careful to court the amirs with gifts of fruit from his garden.⁴²

Al-Biqāʿī and others visited al-Matbulī at his hostel during the controversy, probably in an attempt to establish a wider, more popular base for their position. When they asked him about Ibn al-Fāriḍ, al-Matbulī replied: "He and those like him fill the world with clamor! None of them has been given enough of the divine mystery to cover a mosquito's proboscis!"⁴³

But Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters also escalated their activities on the poet's behalf, and al-Biqāʿī and other opponents were the targets of lampoons. The most famous Cairene poet of the time, the Ḥanbalī Aḥmad al-Manṣūrī (798 or 799–887/1387 or 1388–1482), wrote a long ode in which the second hemistich of each line was a verse from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*. The poem scolded al-Biqāʿī for his false charges and intransigence and praised Ibn al-Fāriḍ for his nobility, spiritual insight, and beautiful verse.⁴⁴

More frequently, the invectives consisted of a few verses written on a page and then attached to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine for all to read. In one invective al-Manṣūrī said of al-Biqāʿī:⁴⁵

Indeed al-Biqāʿī is accountable
for what he has said;
do not consider him safe
for his heart will be punished!

The poet Muhammad ibn Qānṣūh min Ṣādiq (fl. 900/1495) wrote:⁴⁶

ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the learned one,
whose desire thought cannot comprehend,
no one would harm him save a fool!
So dismiss the fool; be pleased with ʿUmar.

And someone satirized Ibn al-Shiḥnah, saying:⁴⁷

Oh Ibn al-Shiḥnah, the Ḥanafī,
you've become
the unique of the ages
in all hateful things!

In Egypt, you foolishly claim
knowledge of Abū Ḥanīfah,
while you are truly
his disgrace!

Hidden Agendas

The invectives and feuding suggest that the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy involved more than religious ideology, which, of course, was a central issue. The political and economic crisis beginning Qā'it Bāy's reign had evoked a response from religious conservatives who demanded the eradication of suspected innovations in doctrine and practice and a return to the pious faith of their forefathers. To this group in Mamluk Egypt Ibn al-Fāriḍ symbolized the most abhorrent heresies: the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, believed to permeate his *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā*, and the veneration of saints, as people gathered at his tomb for blessings and food. Indeed, both beliefs threatened conservative religious authority; Ibn al-ʿArabī's theosophy denied the existence of a simple and absolute literal Truth, while the existence of saints theoretically represented a direct access to religious power uncontrolled by traditional scholarly supervision.⁴⁸

Even a cursory glance at the disputants, however, would warn against dismissing the controversy as a "Sufi-ʿulamā" conflict or as a confrontation between mystics and legal authorities, a more sophisticated if no less convincing analysis. Both sides of the debate had representatives from the four major law schools, and Sufis, jurists, and judges took both sides on the issue. Certainly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters had a broader, more inclusive view of Islam, but age may have been a more important factor.⁴⁹

At the time of the dispute the major antagonists of Ibn al-Fāriḍ were sixty years or older; they were backed by a group of their students who were probably in their early twenties.⁵⁰ Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters included some elder scholars and poets,⁵¹ but the majority were between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-five and, thus, represented the next generation of senior religious officials. Given the unusually desperate economic situation—which included pay cuts for religious scholars and confiscations of their wealth—the competition for jobs and wages must have been fierce, and the issue of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's infidelity could be used to discredit one's opponent whether he was a rising youngster or an entrenched elder.⁵²

Further, old wounds and differences in personalities also colored the affair, as did self-interest. Al-Suyūṭī, for instance, appears to have had a friendship with Barqūq and his son ʿAlī Bāy. Perhaps in gratitude for al-Suyūṭī's defense of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Barqūq appointed al-Suyūṭī shaykh of Sufism at the former's tomb complex in 875/1470, a paid position al-Suyūṭī held until he resigned the post in 901/1491.⁵³

Other supporters of Ibn al-Fāriḍ seemed to have been more inclined to the court and its amusements than to religion or scholarship. Muhammad al-Sakhāwī accused al-Khaṭīb al-Wazīrī (b. 847/1443) of being a pushy

fraud and a sycophant. Al-Wazīrī was a companion of Ibn al-Ghars, another courtier, whom al-Sakhāwī criticized for an addiction to chess and worldly things. Al-Sakhāwī also berated two other defenders of the poet, Ibn Sharaf al-Jawharī (b. 820/1417) and his companion, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (814–79/1412–74), for roaming the taverns. He further noted that, while Ibn al-Qaṭṭān was servile before his patrons, with others he acted haughty. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān always wanted to be seated in the places of highest distinction, and he fought for this privilege, on one occasion, with al-Biqāʿī and, on another, with ʿAbd al-Barr Ibn al-Shiḥnah.⁵⁴

Another of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's allies, Qāsim ibn Quṭlūbughā (c. 802–79 / c. 1399–1474) also bore a grudge against Ibn al-Shiḥnah and his son ʿAbd al-Barr. Muhammad al-Sakhāwī stated that Ibn Quṭlūbughā had been among Ibn al-Shiḥnah's most intimate friends until the latter said terrible things about him in the sultan's court. Al-Sakhāwī did not mention what caused Ibn al-Shiḥnah to slander his friend, but Ibn Quṭlūbughā was a widely respected Ḥanafī scholar, and Ibn al-Shiḥnah, the chief Ḥanafī judge, may have felt threatened by him.⁵⁵

Indeed, Ibn al-Shiḥnah was known to have jealously guarded his numerous positions, and Muhammad al-Sakhāwī described him as greedy and prone to indebtedness; he was disliked by some of Qāʿit Bāy's amirs. Ibn al-Shiḥnah frequently appointed his son ʿAbd al-Barr as a substitute to fulfill a number of jobs. But the young man became conceited, and al-Sakhāwī said that ʿAbd al-Barr acted high-handedly as a substitute, earning the contempt of other scholars and of Qāʿit Bāy himself. Al-Sakhāwī added that ʿAbd al-Barr would insult anyone, including his teachers.⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, the most controversial figure in the affair was Ibrāhīm al-Biqāʿī. Al-Biqāʿī was primarily a *ḥadīth* scholar and biographer, and he and Muhammad al-Sakhāwī had been fellow students of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. This experience, however, seems to have embittered al-Sakhāwī, who not only denounced al-Biqāʿī in his *al-Dawʿ* but also wrote a separate work against him. Al-Sakhāwī depicted al-Biqāʿī as a vile imposter who would say anything and stop at nothing for his own personal aggrandizement.⁵⁷ While a hostile professional rivalry between the two men provoked many of al-Sakhāwī's biting remarks, another contemporary, al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī (819–900/1416–95), also noted that al-Biqāʿī was of extremely bad character and was quick to slander others.⁵⁸ In this light al-Biqāʿī may have stirred up and prolonged the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy in order to exhibit his religiosity, display his erudition, and, perhaps, gain professional notoriety and advancement.⁵⁹

In addition to religious, economic, and personal issues, the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy involved important political factors. Any prolonged conflict

among Cairo's religious elite was an alarming situation for the Mamluk sultans, since discord could generate domestic tension and undermine the sultan's religious legitimacy. Religious controversies, such as the one involving Ibn al-Fāriḍ, implied that all was not well in the kingdom, which had become infected with heresy and infidelity. Such ideological unrest, combined with political instability and a strained economy, might precipitate a rebellion within the Mamluk ranks, and it was in the sultan's best interests to promptly quiet disruptive elements.

More specifically, the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy directly challenged Qā'it Bāy's power by threatening one of his favorite amirs, his *khushdash* Barqūq. The charges of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's infidelity had, by extension, been applied to Barqūq, who had administered the endowments for the tomb. If Ibn al-Fāriḍ were an infidel, the endowments would be illegal, and Barqūq and others who had labored on the shrine's behalf would be disgraced and accused of stupidity or infidelity. Further, they would lose all of the religious merit and blessings that they assumed had been earned as well as any further revenues, which they might have derived from the site. This religious and economic loss might well have angered Barqūq and alienated him from Qā'it Bāy had the sultan done nothing to prevent Ibn al-Fāriḍ's conviction as an infidel. Given the empire's insecure state in 874/1469, Qā'it Bāy could not afford to placate a group of disgruntled elder scholars at the expense of Barqūq, a most reliable *khushdash* amir. Though Qā'it Bāy may have appreciated Ibn al-Fāriḍ as a poet or venerated him as a saint, the political dimensions of the controversy were undoubtedly a catalyst for the sultan's resolution of the problem at the end of the year.⁶⁰

Al-Biqā'ī's Disgrace

The historian Ibn Iyās (852–930/1448–1524) wrote:⁶¹

In fact, a certain amir was biased in favor of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.⁶² Indeed, the sultan was too, and he ordered his private secretary, Ibn Muzhir, to write a qualified question to the shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Zakariyā al-Shāfi'ī. So he wrote this question as follows:

"What does the shaykh, the imām, the great scholar, the ocean of comprehension, Zakariyā al-Anṣārī al-Shāfi'ī—may God benefit the Muslims by way of him—say about those who call an infidel our lord and master, the shaykh, the gnostic of God, 'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ—may God protect him with His mercy and be satisfied with him—whose doctrine is consid-

ered depravity due to a [mis]understanding of his words, which make specific references to meanings well known among the great Sufis, in the technical language of their discourse in which there is no danger to the religious law. Do the words of this gnostic refer to the technical terminology of his way or to the technical terminology of a non-Islamic community? So what is the answer to this? Give a legal opinion to us who will reward!"

He sent this question to the shaykh Zakariyā who refused to write upon it for as long as possible. But [the secretary] beseeched him for a number of days until [Zakariyā] wrote and answered saying:

"The words of this gnostic—may God's mercy be upon him and may He give benefit with his spiritual blessings [*bar-akāt*]⁶³—refer to the technical terminology of the folk of his way. Indeed, to them it is literal since the technical term is true in its technical meaning, being metaphorical in any other meaning, as is well established. One should not look at what one supposes to be an expression of incarnationism or unificationism in some verses of the *al-Tā'īyah*, though there is none of that in his state or poetry in the *al-Tā'īyah*, as he has said in the ode:

In the clearer of two visions
I have a sign
that keeps my creed free
of the incarnation view.⁶³

"Sometimes when the gnostic of God is submerged in the sea of oneness [*tawhīd*] and gnosis to the extent that his essence and characteristics have vanished in His characteristics, and he is absent to all save Him, expressions issue from him, which are perceived as incarnationism and unificationism because the expressions fall short of clearly explaining his state to which he has ascended, as a group of the scholars of theology have said.⁶⁴ But these expressions should be concealed from those who cannot comprehend them, for not every heart is fit for the secret nor is every oyster suited for the pearl. For every folk there is a way of speaking, but not everything known is spoken. So, it is incumbent on those who do not comprehend it, to refrain from refutation, just as one of [the Sufis] has said concerning spiritual meaning [*ma'nā*]:

If you are deceived
by the senses,
you will see by staring,
not by arguing.

But if you don't see
the crescent moon, be at peace,
for mankind sees it
with vision.⁶⁵

"Had the critic tasted what the gnostic tasted, he would not have rebuked him, as this speaker has said:

Had my blamer tasted my ardent love,
he would have loved with me.
But he didn't taste it!

"This is the situation. God bestows his blessing or withholds it to whomever He wills according to His justice. May God bless our master Muhammad, his family and companions, and give them peace. This was written by Zakariyā ibn Muhammad al-Anṣārī al-Shāfi'ī."

The wording of the personal secretary's question and his praise of the poet left no doubt about Qā'it Bāy's position on the subject of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.⁶⁶ Choosing Zakariyā al-Anṣārī (826–925 or 926/1423–1519) may have further assured that the final opinion on the matter would be favorable to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his supporters. Well educated in jurisprudence and Sufism, Zakariyā was noted for his piety and fairness. But, while he sometimes criticized Qā'it Bāy and exhorted him to be a good and just ruler, he was considerate of the sultan's interests, for which he was duly rewarded. Finally, two of Zakariyā's contemporaries, Muhammad al-Sakhāwī and Ibn Iyās, regarded him as a staunch supporter of Ibn al-Fāriḍ.⁶⁷

Ibn Iyās did not say why Zakariyā al-Anṣārī at first refused to answer the private secretary's request for a legal opinion on the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy, though this hesitation might be construed as resulting from circumspection and a sense of equity in the matter. In fact, one of Zakariyā's students, Ibn al-Shammā' (c. 880–936/1475–1529), related that his teacher did not believe the poet to be either an infidel or a saint until one Friday when Zakariyā was miraculously enlightened with knowledge of the poet's sainthood.⁶⁸ The Sufi biographer al-Sha'rānī (897–973/1491–1565) also noted Zakariyā's hesitation in giving an opinion and his eventual decision to support the poet.⁶⁹

When the ordeal of Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī took place because of his censure of the master 'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ—may God be satisfied with him—the sultan sent to the '*ulamā*'. They wrote to him regarding how they saw it, but the shaykh Zakariyā . . . refused. Then he met the shaykh Muhammad al-Istambūli, who said, "Write and defend [the Sufis]!"

Zakariyā's brief answer did not declare Ibn al-Fāriḍ to be a saint, but it did refer to him as a gnostic who possessed spiritual power (*barakah*) and whose creed was free from the heresies of incarnationism and unificationism. Like other defenders of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Zakariyā permitted the use of metaphors and technical terminology by the poet. Questionable expressions in the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* were not the result of heresy or infidelity but, rather, were due to the limitations of speech to communicate the ineffable. The inability to articulate a profound mystical state did not belie the gnostic's experience of it, and those not suited for enlightenment should keep quiet.

Interestingly, Zakariyā did not call anyone an infidel. This moderation together with his hesitation to answer the question suggest that Zakariyā may have realized that his opinion would be used by the sultan to put an end to the controversy. While Zakariyā exonerated Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his supporters—who included Barqūq—from charges of heresy and infidelity, he did not severely chastise the poet's critics, perhaps hoping to temper Qā'it Bāy's response, which was sure to follow.

Zakariyā may have delivered his opinion near the end of 874/1469, during a royal session held to censure al-Biqā'ī. The historian al-Jawharī also noted that, at the beginning of 875/1470, the chief judges and the shaykh al-Islām greeted the sultan as usual and that they said nothing about the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy. But Ibn al-Fāriḍ's opponents must have sensed their vulnerability, for al-Jawharī said that al-Biqā'ī was the first person to go up to the Citadel on that day. He sat in the mosque and refused to take back what he had said regarding the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* or the charge of infidelity against Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Further, it had been rumored that, prior to his going to the Citadel, al-Biqā'ī had written his will to say that, if he were killed, he would die a martyr.⁷⁰

Other statements defended al-Biqā'ī for starting the controversy. Al-Sha'rānī related that a student of al-Biqā'ī had said to him:⁷¹

[We] only criticized the [Sufis] for fear that the common people would ruin their beliefs because they have not followed [the Sufis'] way, and because it is impossible for everyone to be familiar with the technical terminology of their expressions.

So I thought that creating an aversion to their speech was best for the common people and most fitting and, if not that, then discouraging belief in the master Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī and the master Ibn al-Fāriḍ. But praise be to God that I believe in them! I only criticized expressions attributed to them that were probably not their words. The heretics have inserted many things into the speech of the religious leaders without the latter knowing it!

Further, al-Biqāʿī seems to have tried to place blame for the controversy on the judges Ibn al-Shiḥnah and ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Kinānī by saying: “I was inclined toward Ibn al-Fāriḍ, but al-ʿIzz al-Ḥanbalī and Ibn al-Shiḥnah censured me. But it is useless to ascribe lying, bad luck, or falsehood to Ibn al-Shiḥnah, for he is the greatest leader of the Sunnis!”⁷²

Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s Ghost

Qāʾit Bāy apparently took no immediate action against Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s opponents, but a strange thing happened in the first month of 875/1470. Al-Jawharī heard from Zakariyā al-Anṣārī that ʿAlī ibn Khāṣṣ Bāy, Qāʾit Bāy’s father-in-law, was riding in the Qarāfah one day, when he saw a fine looking man before him. As ʿAlī reined his horse, a second man of awesome appearance approached the first man, spoke to him, and then left. ʿAlī ibn Khāṣṣ Bāy asked the remaining man about the other. The stranger was amazed that ʿAlī did not recognize Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and he said, “Everyday he rises up from this place seeking God’s protection from those who speak ill of him!”⁷³

This miraculous occurrence attested to Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s sainthood and may have legitimized the position of his supporters on a more popular level than did Zakariyā’s legal opinion. Further, the incident involved a close relative of Qāʾit Bāy, and the sultan, in turn, may have used the event to sanction his replacement of some senior religious officials participating in the controversy.

The first to go was Ibn Imām al-Kāmiliyah, who had held a number of positions and administered a substantial amount of religious endowments. In poor health, Ibn Imām al-Kāmiliyah had left on pilgrimage in 874/1469, prior to the controversy’s resolution, but he died six days after leaving Cairo.⁷⁴ Most of the endowments that he had administered were then entrusted to Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥiṣnī (815–81/1412–76), one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s supporters.⁷⁵ Another opponent, the Ḥanbalī judge ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Kinānī, seems to have been respected by everyone including the sultan. Although Qāʾit Bāy did not act against al-Kinānī, who died the next year,

in 876/1471, the sultan did depose another judge, the very powerful and influential Ibn al-Shiḥnah.⁷⁶

In Shaʿbān in 875/1470 Ibn al-Shiḥnah was dismissed from the office of chief Ḥanafī judge on charges of falsifying documents involving religious endowments. Ibn al-Shiḥnah's entire staff of deputies, including his son ʿAbd al-Barr, was also fired. By this time Ibn al-Shiḥnah had fallen from the sultan's grace, for, aside from the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy, the judge had been involved in illegal real estate transactions at the beginning of the year. Three months later, perhaps to regain Qāʾit Bāy's favor, Ibn al-Shiḥnah had delivered a Friday sermon to the amirs and the army, in which he profusely praised the sultan's justice and superiority. But the judge appears to have treated the sermon lightly, and he read it instead of delivering it more spontaneously. This angered the sultan further, and, when the opportunity arose, he dismissed Ibn al-Shiḥnah.⁷⁷

Qāʾit Bāy wanted to appoint al-Kāfiyāji—a defender of Ibn al-Fāriḍ—as Ibn al-Shiḥnah's replacement, but some scholars objected on the grounds that al-Kāfiyāji lacked the requisite expertise.⁷⁸ Ibn al-Shiḥnah was reinstated, but two years later, in 877/1472, he again angered Qāʾit Bāy and was dismissed from the judgeship for the last time.⁷⁹

The Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy may have also contributed to Ibrāhīm al-Matbulī's expulsion from Egypt and his subsequent death. Qāʾit Bāy probably suspected this Sufi's motives for freely feeding the masses and patronizing his amirs, with whom al-Matbulī had some influence. Further, al-Matbulī often openly opposed the sultan, as he did concerning Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and so, in 877/1472, Qāʾit Bāy is reported to have said to him, "Egypt isn't big enough for the both of us!" Outraged, al-Matbulī left for Jerusalem, only to die en route.⁸⁰

As for al-Biqāʿī, his fate was directly linked to his role in the controversy. His positions and writings on the affair had so infuriated a group of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters that they publicly insulted al-Biqāʿī at one of his sessions during Ramaḍān in 875/1470. Al-Biqāʿī filed a complaint but then instructed some of his followers to seize and beat his adversaries. Qāʾit Bāy's private secretary, Ibn Muzhir, learned of al-Biqāʿī's plan and put a stop to it. But the next day al-Biqāʿī brought the matter before the grand chamberlain (*ḥājib al-ḥujjāb*), the amir Timur (d. 880/1475).⁸¹ Al-Biqāʿī attempted to approach Timur to plead his case, but he was stopped by a group of religious scholars, including three defenders of Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Ibn al-Oaṭṭān, Ibn Sharaf al-Jawjarī, and al-Khaṭīb al-Wazīrī. They declared their support of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and accused those who opposed him of infidelity. Al-Biqāʿī left in disgrace.⁸² Sometime later al-Biqāʿī migrated with his student Nūr al-Dīn al-Maḥallī to Damascus, where he stayed until his death in 885/1480.⁸³

The misfortunes that befell Ibn al-Fāriḍ's opponents certainly stemmed from more than their parts in the controversy. Nevertheless, the sultan Qā'it Bāy may have perceived their efforts to brand Ibn al-Fāriḍ an infidel as an attempt to entrench their own religious and political authority vis-à-vis their younger rivals and him, the new sultan. Rather than yielding to the demands of a conservative clique of the religious elite, Qā'it Bāy used the controversy to create a fresh balance of power more favorable to himself. As for Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his tomb, Qā'it Bāy named the shrine's administrator, Barqūq, viceroy of Damascus in 875/1470 and appointed a substitute for him at the shrine. When Barqūq died in 877/1472 Qā'it Bāy appointed a son of the amir as the overseer of the religious endowments, which continued to attract the poor and mendicants, as before.⁸⁴

Further, the controversy enhanced the poet's popularity and sealed his claim to sainthood. Religious scholars and litterateurs had gone to the shrine in 874/1469 to display their support of the poet, indicating that the educated, too, congregated at the tomb. The controversy's resolution also convinced many that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was unquestionably one of God's saints—that the adversities suffered by his opponents were the direct result of his spiritual power. After the controversy of 874/1469 organized opposition to Ibn al-Fāriḍ evaporated, and he continued to be honored and his shrine visited and patronized long after Egypt came under Ottoman rule.⁸⁵

Disjunction

The Saint's Power

When the Ottoman conqueror of Egypt, Selim I (d. 926/1520), left on campaign in 924/1518, his governor in Cairo ordered the Qur'ān to be read at eight holy stations in the city to insure the sultan's success. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb was among the eight, indicating that the complex was still religiously and politically important in Egypt. Further, this honor also reflected an Ottoman predilection for speculative mysticism, especially that of Ibn al-ʿArabī, with which Ibn al-Fāriḍ had long been connected.¹

The prevalent Ottoman view of Ibn al-Fāriḍ was well represented in the work of the famous encyclopedist and biographer Tashköprüzāde (901–68/1495–1561), who praised the poet's verse, good disposition, and piety. But, in addition to standard biographical data, Tashköprüzāde also related that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had personally learned *ḥadīth* from Ibn al-ʿArabī, and this supposed historical relationship no doubt reinforced popular notions of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* as a poetic rendition of Ibn al-ʿArabī's work.²

Belief in Ibn al-Fāriḍ as the unsurpassed monistic poet was also promoted by the comprehensive account of him by the Sufi hagiographer al-Munāwī (952–1031/1545–1622). Al-Munāwī appears to have had access to nearly all earlier sources on the poet, and he judiciously edited and arranged this material to produce an inspirational narrative of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mystical training, states, and miracles, which he believed served as the wellspring for the poet's verse. A slightly abridged version of this hagiography, made by the famous Ḥanbalī historian Ibn al-ʿImād (1032–1089/1623–79), furthered the mystical reputation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and suggests the great extent to which this saintly image had come to be accepted.³

Yet, as in the past, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supposed association with doctrines of unification and Ibn al-ʿArabī also led to the poet's censure. One of those who railed against the unificationists and Ibn al-Fāriḍ was the Zaydī

Shīʿī scholar Ṣāliḥ al-Maqbalī (1040–1108/1631–96), who quoted with approval Ibn Khaldūn's opinion that monistic works, including those by Ibn al-ʿArabī, and most of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry, should be destroyed.⁴

The greatest threat to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry and shrine during this period, however, seems to have stemmed from the Ottoman chief judge in Egypt, Muḥammad ibn Ilyās (d. 954/1547). During his term of office (938–45/1531–38) he discouraged the visitation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb and harassed those who recited the poet's verse there every Friday. According to al-Munāwī, the judge later renounced his actions after being afflicted with an incurable illness believed to have been sent on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's behalf. Another explanation for the judge's change of heart was the pressure put on him by higher Ottoman authorities to mend his ways; a few years later Ibn Ilyās was relieved from another post, having earned Sultan Sulaymān's (r. 926–74/1520–66) displeasure for criticizing Ibn al-ʿArabī.⁵

Although Ibn al-Fāriḍ's detractors in the Ottoman period were few, questions of his piety and doctrinal purity persisted, as is evidenced in legal opinions, biographies, and interpretations of his verse offered by his supporters. Prominent in many of these works are tales of his antagonists' censure or their recantations after they had experienced a terrifying dream or illness attributed to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's saintly power.

It was told that Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī once wrote a commentary on verses from the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* and then sent it to his Sufi master, Shaykh Madyan (d. 862/1458), for approval. But Madyan returned the work to Ibn Ḥajar with a verse written on its cover:

She set out east; you went west—
What a distance between
where the sun rises
and where it sets!

Upon reading the verse, Ibn Ḥajar repented for his arrogance and became a follower of the shaykh.⁶ In another story an opponent of the poet reversed his position and believed in him after a nightmare in which Ibn al-Fāriḍ cut out the tongues of those who denied his sainthood. Still other stories involved more recent Ottoman critics such as Ibn Ilyās and Ibn Iskandar al-Rūmī (d. ca. 1000/1591), who some believed had been struck ill and died for criticizing Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ.⁷

Inducing an opponent's recantation was Ibn al-Fāriḍ's most frequent miracle, and this suggests that many of his devotees were well educated and familiar with theological disputes. By contrast, saints popular primar-

ily among the poor were often credited with miracles that met some immediate physical need of the destitute, such as feeding the masses.⁸

Despite such miraculous vindications of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's sainthood, the vast majority of writings on the poet and his verse were rarely defensive or polemical. More often, an author's tone was of deep appreciation and reverential gratitude for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's lifetime of literary and religious accomplishment. Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetic style and use of mystical imagery were consciously imitated by many poets, and more than a dozen commentaries were written on his verse during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.⁹

Of particular importance was the commentary by 'Abd al-Ghānī al-Nābulusī (1050–1143/1641–1731), which encompassed the entire *Dīwān*. In his work *Kashf al-sirr al-ghāmiḍ* al-Nābulusī revealed the inner spiritual meanings that many had come to believe lay hidden beneath every verse of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry. Al-Nābulusī read and interpreted the poems in light of a monistic theosophy derived largely from Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings, and his commentary is a splendid source for mapping the major mystical and theological beliefs current among many of the educated elite at that time. Further, al-Nābulusī's popular commentary and numerous others are indicative of the celebrity that Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his poetry had achieved.¹⁰ But that was obvious to anyone who visited his shrine on Friday.

The Dome of Worship

The talented Ottoman author and traveler Evliyā Čelebī (1020– ca. 1095/1611– ca. 1684) left an account of the Friday session (*ḥadrah*) at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine, which he attended around 1080/1670.¹¹

Every Friday there are such crowds at his mosque that a newcomer thinks he won't find room; but then, by God's command, he squeezes in, as though [entering] the ocean of nobles, and finds a place. All the people sit on one another's knees. Elite and commoners do not find each other disagreeable but all participate together with common purpose. It is a marvel! This kind of spiritual unity is not to be found at other shrines. The reason is, according to the *'ulamā'* of Egypt, that the noble spirit of the Prophet himself as well as the spirits of other prophets are present in this mosque every Friday. All of the shaykhs of Egypt are agreed on this point.

Evliyā Čelebī noted that five to six thousand people gathered at the shrine every Friday to recite from the Qurʾān, pray, and participate in Sufi

dhikr ceremonies. This was followed by the chanting of Qur'ānic passages by individual professional readers, who then recited, in unison, the first portion of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā*. Upon hearing these verses, spiritually sensitive individuals would attain an ecstasy granted them by the Prophet Muhammad and the great saints present at this shrine, which had become a meeting place for all social classes:¹²

Each Friday the Prophet is present in person, and for this reason there is such a crowd of people that they sit on each other's shoulders, yet no one is offended with anyone, rather everyone is happy. It is a marvel! Also, there is no distinction between rich and poor in this shrine. Everyone sits on one another's knees, packed like fish!

Evliyā Ćelebī was amazed by the harmony among the shrine's visitors, with their diverse social and economic backgrounds. Yet such feelings of concord were probably nurtured by sharing free food distributed at the site. Individuals in search of other earthly or more heavenly blessings would also have conducted themselves with decorum and requisite humility. Further, many visitors mutually appreciated the aesthetic and religious dimensions of the recitations, particularly on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *mawlid*, or "saint's day," when the Prophet Muhammad's spirit was believed to visit the shrine:¹³

Once a year there is a *mawlid*, and 200,000 people gather there [at the shrine]. The 'ulamā' of Egypt are agreed that the spirit of the Prophet is there on that day, since, at the time of that *mawlid*, light illuminates the interior of the mosque. This is peculiar to the mosque of 'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ and does not occur at other mosques. No proud or haughty person may participate in the *mawlid*, but only those who are destitute, the mystics [*budalā'*], and wandering dervishes [*malāmiyūn*]. Also on this day quite a few people demonstrate their mystical blessings [*kashf*, *karāmah*].

No doubt, Evliyā Ćelebī intended his gross attendance figures to underscore the popular veneration of Ibn al-Fāriḍ by Cairo's Muslim population. But, more important, his descriptions highlight the vitality of the shrine's rituals and religious services, which, he claimed, were wholeheartedly supported by Egypt's ruling and religious elite. Much of his account would be corroborated twenty-five years later by a great admirer of the poet, al-Nābulusī.

Shortly after entering Cairo in 1105/1693, al-Nābulusī paid his first visit to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his shrine on a Friday; he prayed the noon prayer there and stayed for the afternoon session:¹⁴

We sat down until many more people gathered. Then they read the Qurʾān and said many prayers, the *dhikr*, and praises of God. Then the people drew together, and the singers [*munshidūn*] began, one after another, to sing the words of the shaykh ʿUmar—May God sanctify his spirit—repeating a single hemistich over and over at the request of some in the audience; the singers would lower their eyes, weep, cry out, and show ecstasy. Everyone there was suddenly seized by spiritual states to the extent that one of the singers—or perhaps he was from the audience—screamed, tore his cloak, and ran out stepping on the people and bereft of his senses. It is said that this session is like this every Friday and that the spirit of the Prophet—God’s blessing and peace be upon him—is in attendance.

Five weeks later al-Nābulusī attended another Friday session, which he vividly detailed:¹⁵

The [Sufis] and all of those attending had read *Sūrat al-Kahf*,¹⁶ and they began to pray for the Messenger—God’s blessings and peace be upon him—and for his majesty [the sultan]. Then they sealed the meeting and read the *al-Fātiḥah*.¹⁷ Then all of the Qurʾān readers read something from the Qurʾān. Next a singer arose and sang from the words of the shaykh ʿUmar—May God be satisfied with him. Everyone sat silently. A singer would rise and another would sit down, and, whenever one of them sang a hemistich of a verse, those present would show ecstasy and be seized by a spiritual state. So the singer would repeat that hemistich, while the people sat jammed together.

That congregational mosque was so full that, if someone was seized by a spiritual state, he would get up and throw himself upon the others, and they would all call out together as the inner meaning of that verse of the shaykh ʿUmar’s speech pervaded them. A man came in from outside, then two more, then three, and they entered with great spiritual fervor and deep humility, stepping on the people while the latter

found a place for them to sit. Had a thousand people come, a place would have been found for them all!

That session expanded for all, while their space diminished. Everyone was humble, weeping and sighing from the intensity of a spiritual state, great ecstasy, humility, and submission. So someone would shout, "Repeat!" And so the singer would repeat what he had said. Then another would shout it, and he would repeat it, and so on until I and . . . those with us from the group were seized by an intense spiritual state and by weeping, sighing, humility, and submission, and the secrets of the divine audition pervaded us to the point where we nearly melted away.

No human being could ever restrain himself from the intensity of that spiritual state, which descends upon one unawares. At times some of the critics from among the Turks [*arwām*] are there, but they are unable to constrain themselves from the spiritual state, which descends upon them unawares, or from the humility, which overwhelms them.

Once I met one of them on another Friday after I had previously attended his audition alone with some of my group. He said to me, "Oh sir, this thing that they do here [at the shrine], is it permissible or forbidden?" But I would not talk to him, and I calmly endured him until the audition began. Then he was seized by a spiritual state, and I have not seen him since.

I have seen the people at the time of the audition, and at other times, circling the grave of the shaykh 'Umar—May God be pleased with him—calling to him for blessings and good fortune, seeking help from his attending spirit and his dazzling divine secrets. And God most high aids them and decrees their needs according to His saying—He is most high—"Oh you who believe, fear God and seek the means to Him!"¹⁸

And there is no greater means unto God most high than the pure and noble spirits of His saints and the dazzling manifest lights of their graves, for they are more noble unto Him most high than works, words, spiritual states, pious deeds, or acts of worship. But how much more if to good works were added the perfect fortunate spirits! One who denies this will be driven from the gates of the noble ones, being conceited with what he has done in the forms of works and pious deeds, which are empty of humility and reverence. Those like him are like one who brings a present to a great king while

degrading and scorning [the king's] boon-companions, casting every kind of insult upon them, and, in spite of that, he still hopes for [the king's] welcome, acceptance, reward, and abundant favor. If that man is not possessed, then surely he will be forever banished and cursed!

We did not stumble during that audition, though the attentive hearts and ears were intoxicated by the wine of divine love, such that a man—who was said to have been the shaykh Sha^cbān—arose from among the singers and sang from the *al-Jīmīyah*.¹⁹

In the battlefield
of hearts and glances,
I am slain
without sin or guilt.

So the audience cried out in ecstasy, and some people bumped into others, while he repeated that [verse] to them at their request. He became enraptured along with them until he came to [Ibn al-Fāriḍ's] saying:²⁰

Blessed be God,
how sweet his qualities!

Then he threw off his turban and his wool robe, tore his cape, and left in his underwear, bereft of his senses! Then another singer, who was inspired, stood up after him and sang until the session came to an end. Then we arose, having been impressed by the calls of spiritual states and the firm intentions of men's sincerity.

In this detailed description of the Friday session at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine, al-Nābulusī noted the same basic sequence of rituals recounted earlier by Evliyā Çelebī: the Qur^ʿānic invocation and prayers, the Qur^ʿān chanting and repeated singing of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses. But, above all, al-Nābulusī stressed the emotional impact of the service. As the congregation became immersed in the chants and song, faith was nearly palpable; Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse was moving, his saintly presence real. Absorbed in the audition, al-Nābulusī and others shared in a collective experience of transcendence, affirming their religious and cultural unity. On Friday afternoons at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine self-will vanished in a moment of true submission.

This audition and other acts of worship involving the saints were the

quickest path to God's grace and forgiveness. Invoking an ancient metaphor, al-Nābulusī pictured God as a king surrounded by his favorite courtiers, His saints, who had the power to intercede with Him on behalf of the humble masses. To insult or reject the saints was evidence of impudence and spiritual pride, which could only lead to perdition. But belief in the saints and their veneration produced humility and the proper intentions for mystical states and pious deeds.²¹

Al-Nābulusī's experiences at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine must have reinforced his belief in the efficacy of the saints, for even those few who opposed the audition were spiritually overwhelmed.²² Still, he knew that religious states and practices could result in questionable behavior. But this was not the case in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's sessions, during which mystical intoxication yielded divine truths. Al-Nābulusī was certain of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's sainthood, and his report of events at the shrine is an intimate and compelling account of Muslim devotional worship.²³

The Ruined Shrine

When Evliyā Çelebî and al-Nābulusī visited Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine late in the seventeenth century, Egypt was slipping from Ottoman control. Warring factions of the Ottoman military units in Egypt stirred up political turmoil and internal strife and, later, went so far as to cause a civil war in 1123/1711. The Qāzdughlî faction of Mamluks finally fought their way to the top and secured their position of leadership in Egypt around 1161/1748. By 1173/1760 the Ottoman sultan had lost the province to the Qāzdughlîs, who ruled Egypt *de facto* and sought to reestablish Mamluk domination over Syria as well. To further their dynastic aspirations the Qāzdughlî rulers savagely eliminated all challengers, and they relied on illegal and burdensome taxes to finance their campaigns. Although these amirs were cruel and avaricious, they contributed substantially to many religious establishments, perhaps seeking public support or atonement for past and future atrocities.²⁴

In 1173/1760 'Alī Bāy al-Ghazzāwī, the amir al-Ḥajj, renovated Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mosque and repaired the dome over the shrine.²⁵ Such patronage by one of the most powerful Qāzdughlîs of the time suggests that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's funerary complex remained important as a place for collective worship. But it may also indicate that the complex had lost a part or all of its ample religious endowments, which originally had been assigned to cover such repairs. Perhaps one or another of the Mamluk factions previously appropriated revenues set aside for the tomb and impoverished it, forcing the shrine to rely on less dependable individual patrons.²⁶

Further evidence of financial instability and possible declining impor-

tance of the site is that the shrine and Ibn al-Fāriḍ were rarely mentioned in sources written during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Of course, educated Egyptians continued to read and imitate Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry, and some read the commentaries.²⁷ In fact, Rushayyid ibn Ghālib al-Daḥdāḥ (d. 1306/1889) published his popular edition of the *Dirwān* in 1269/1853, which also included 'Alī's *Dibājah*, al-Būrīnī's grammatical gloss, and an abridgment of al-Nābulusī's mystical commentary. Although this edition was frequently reissued, only one new commentary was written; four minor biographies of the poet were also compiled during this period.²⁸

Yet Ibn al-Fāriḍ's saintly popularity among the Egyptian elite was in eclipse in the nineteenth century, as Egypt's new sovereign, Muhammad 'Alī (r. 1220–62/1805–48), firmly resolved to transform his domain into a modern Western-style state. He dramatically curtailed the power of religious authorities by replacing the endowments of various religious establishments with paltry stipends, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine was a victim of this financially ruinous policy.²⁹

Muhammad 'Alī also encouraged the importation of Western ideas and values, which further eroded the influence of the religious institutions among the upper classes. By sending students abroad for education and by establishing state-run secular schools, Muhammad 'Alī hoped to create a well-trained, highly organized army and bureaucracy to secure his rule. Therefore, for anyone seeking government employment, a secular education and knowledge of Western languages promised professional success, and many educated Egyptians began to accept liberal values and to adopt Western political, legal, and social institutions, with little modification. To many of this newly Westernized elite institutional Islam and the Sufi orders, in particular, were the moribund collective bearers of the old traditional values and, as such, the propagators of superstition, fatalism, and apathy. Very few of them would ever visit Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb.³⁰

At the same time many religious scholars under the influence of the eighteenth-century Islamic reform movements hoped to return to the pristine Islam of the pious forefathers by purging the Muslim community of heretical innovations. Following Ibn Taymiyah, their inspirational ancestor, they believed that monistic doctrines and such practices as the veneration of the saints and the visitation of tombs had led Muslims to neglect their duties in this world and to become prisoners of passivity and fatalism. This reform-minded '*ulamā*' had little sympathy for Ibn al-Fāriḍ or his shrine. Together with declining financial resources and the Western acculturation of many educated Egyptians, this may explain why Ibn al-Fāriḍ's funerary complex was in ruins by 1292/1875.³¹

Yet all was not lost. Western ideas and values and the Islamic reform movements made only a slight impact at this time on the majority of the population. Most Muslims, and the humbler classes in particular, continued to adhere to the beliefs of their ancestors and to follow their religious traditions. To them Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb remained a repository of sacred power, a place for prayer and spiritual solace. Perhaps some of the elite, too, when faced with life's inscrutable crises, made an occasional pilgrimage to the saint, as their parents had done.³²

The presence of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's grave continued to sanctify the surrounding earth, and burial in its vicinity was believed to ease one's passage into the next world. Thus, in 1305/1887 Jamīlah Hānum buried her son Ibrāhīm next to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine. Jamīlah Hānum was the daughter of the Westernizing ruler of Egypt, Khedive Ismā'īl (r. 1280–90/1863–73). Although her father was preoccupied with the grandeur of nineteenth-century Europe, to the extent of financing Cairo's first opera house, Jamīlah held fast to Islamic tradition. The young woman admired Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and, two years after her son's premature death, Jamīlah built Ibn al-Fāriḍ's present mosque and, next to it, a large domed crypt to enclose her son's grave.³³

This rebuilding of the mosque in 1307/1889 surely delighted Ibn al-Fāriḍ's supporters, and it must have been a gratifying sign of the saint's persistent power. But there is no evidence that Jamīlah Hānum or any other person further patronized the shrine. Ironically, Jamīlah's large crypt dwarfed Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine, and her dome, not Ibn al-Fāriḍ's, became the architectural focus of the area.

Reformist Attacks

Although Jamīlah Hānum did not rebuild the Sufi hostel or soup kitchen that had been prominent parts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb complex, she had renovated the mosque and its shrine where the poet's *mawlid* continued to be held into the twentieth century.³⁴ Yet such celebrations increasingly became the targets of leading Muslim reformers. Hoping to resurrect a vigorous Islam to defend against the colonialism of an evil secular West, these men vehemently condemned doctrines and practices they believed had corrupted Islam and its society. The modernist reformer Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) was explicit about Sufism:³⁵

the aims of true Sufism were transformed and nothing remained . . . save noises and movements which they call *dhikr*, which every (genuine) Sufi keeps himself from; there is (in addition) the religious glorification of the tombs of the shaykhs

with the belief that they possess hidden power . . . and this is contrary to the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet.

To Riḍā and like-minded reformers the *mawlid*s and other festivals of this degenerate Sufism were frequent occasions for drunkenness and other immoralities, which made sport of true, rational Islam and thereby contributed to the backwardness of the Muslim world. Believing corruption to be rife in the community and faced with new secular and political ideologies, these conservative scholars opposed age-old religious beliefs and traditions in a spirit of uncompromising reform.³⁶

This dramatic transformation in attitude and belief among many Muslims over the last two centuries is concisely illustrated by contrasting al-Nābulusi's reaction to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's sessions with that of Riḍā at a similar event at Cairo's Mawlawī monastery:³⁷

They said to me, "Won't you come and attend the meeting of the Mawlawis in their monastery—it is like the heavenly paradise, lying on the bank of the river Abu 'Ali." I agreed, and went with those who were going after the Friday prayers. It was the opening of the season for these meetings in the spring. I sat in the spectators' space . . . until the time of the session came, when Mawlawi dervishes appeared in their meeting-place in front of us, with their shaykh in the seat of honor. There were handsome beardless youths among them, dressed in snow-white gowns like brides' dresses, dancing to the moving sound of the reed-pipe, turning swiftly and skilfully so that their robes flew out and formed circles, at harmonious distances and not encroaching on one another. They stretched out their arms and inclined their necks, and passed in turn before their shaykh and bowed to him. I asked, "What's this?" and they told me, "This is the ritual prayer of the order founded by our Lord Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, author of the *Mathnawī*."

I could not control myself, and stood up in the centre of the hall and shouted something like this: "O people, or can I call you Muslims! These are forbidden acts, which one has no right either to look at or pass over in silence, for to do so is to accept them. To those who commit them God's word applies, 'They have made their religion a joke and a plaything.' I have done what I was obliged to do; now take your leave, and may God pardon you." Then I left the place and retraced my footsteps quickly to the city; as I was going I looked back, and

found behind me a small number who had returned, while the greater number stayed on.

Riḍā's shock and outrage with Sufi ritual differ sharply from the feelings of awe and harmony which al-Nābulusī felt while he observed the ceremonies at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mosque. Al-Nābulusī had noted that the sessions at Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine had been questioned by a few religious scholars, but such critics were vigorously opposed when they later attempted to curtail the veneration of recognized saints. Yet in the twentieth century the changing intellectual and political climate was more critical of the Sufi orders and their practices, which were dismissed by many as rustic folk beliefs, if not heretical innovations.³⁸

Still, Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Sufism had able defenders, including the very popular Algerian shaykh Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī of Mostaganem (d. 1934). This Sufi openly opposed Riḍā's religious conservatism because he believed it obscured Islam's deeper spiritual dimensions. Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī's views on life and the mystical quest were akin to those of Ibn al-ʿArabī, and he frequently cited verse by Ibn al-Fāriḍ to sum up and accentuate his own beliefs and doctrine. Occasionally, the shaykh's gatherings focused on the recitation and discussion of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse, but elsewhere in North Africa such events became increasingly rare.³⁹

In Cairo, too, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's saintly fortunes suffered. Although his grave remained a pilgrimage site, its shrine and saint's day were in jeopardy. Celebrated since the fifteenth century, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *mawlid* had lost much of its fame and support by 1940; by the early 1960s the public event was no longer held. The dilapidated hostel had been removed, though the shrine continued to have a caretaker.⁴⁰ On Fridays a visiting *imām* led the noon prayers, which were followed by a session with readings from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse.⁴¹

The Elite Image

The absence of the *mawlid* and the hostel indicate the loss of government support for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine. Twentieth-century Egyptian governments, before and after the 1952 revolution, have dealt cautiously with popular forms of Islam; because of the Sufis continued influence among the populace, their orders have been particularly suspect. Recent Egyptian governments have attempted to limit the orders and their festivals and, whenever possible, to co-opt them for political purposes. On the most popular *mawlids*, which may attract over a million people annually, governments have provided pictures of the president, military displays, and fireworks.⁴² As for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's modest saint's day, not only did the

state refuse to finance it, but, until recently, the shrine was denied even the right to hold the festival.⁴³

Yet, while Egyptian governments and a number of educated citizens have condemned Sufi orders and practices, few in this century have criticized Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry or denied its inspirational nature. On the contrary, many of Egypt's religious and secular elites continue to appreciate Sufism as a personal, interior dimension of Islam, and mystical writings, especially poetry, are treasured.⁴⁴ In this respect Ibn al-Fāriḍ has come to symbolize the rapt mystic in love with absolute beauty. Concomitantly, his verse is read not as a theosophical treatise but, instead, as an intimate account of a profound religious experience, a personal confession of faith in God. This romantic reading of Ibn al-Fāriḍ became the prevailing one among the *'ulamā'* and Egyptian intellectuals around 1940, but its origins lie in earlier European scholarship on the poet and his verse.

Beginning in the first half of the nineteenth century, European scholars took an interest in Ibn al-Fāriḍ as a mystical poet, and they edited and translated selections from his *Dīwān*, including the entire *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā*.⁴⁵ Several translators, following medieval Muslim commentators, interpreted Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry as a rhymed version of Ibn al-ʿArabī's monistic doctrines.⁴⁶ Yet the most thorough and influential scholars, C. A. Nallino and R. A. Nicholson, argued that, while Ibn al-Fāriḍ may have been influenced by Ibn al-ʿArabī, his verse was not a doctrinal statement.⁴⁷ Placing Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and work in the context of the psychology of religion instead of theology, Nicholson wrote:⁴⁸

I have no quarrel with those who call Ibnu'l-Fāriḍ a pantheist, but his pantheism (unlike that of his commentators) is essentially a state of feeling, not a system of thought. . . . But although mysticism is not an allegory, still less is it a theology or philosophy. Hence the sayings of "God-intoxicated" men will not serve as a sure criterion of their attitudes toward theology.

By emphasizing personal and devotional qualities of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry, Nallino and Nicholson cleared the poet of the charges of pantheism and heresy. In their opinion Ibn al-Fāriḍ was not an adherent of Ibn al-ʿArabī's *waḥdat al-wujūd* but, rather, a believer in experiential union [*ittiḥād*] with God. It was the ineffability of this profound state and the limitations of language that had led to the confusion of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's intense psychological experience with a monistic dogma.⁴⁹

Was Ibnu'l-Fāriḍ consciously a pantheist? I do not think so. But in the permanent unitive state which he describes himself as having attained, he cannot speak otherwise than pantheistically: he is so merged in the Oneness that he identifies himself now with Mohammad (the Islamic Logos), now with God, whose attributes he assumes and makes his own.

Arab authors began to reevaluate Ibn al-Fāriḍ in light of these studies, and they eagerly embraced the interpretation of him as a "God-intoxicated" poet. Nicholson's writings, in particular, were frequently cited by Arab scholars, who praised Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse for both its artistic merit and religious passion. His poetry was no longer automatically interpreted with reference to Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, and a new emphasis was placed on accounts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's ecstatic states and his supposed struggle to convey a burning desire for God.⁵⁰

More than anyone else, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī developed and popularized this view of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Ḥilmī had a firm grasp of both Arabic source materials and European studies on the poet, and his doctoral dissertation, "Ibn al-Fāriḍ wa-al-ḥubb al-ilāhī" (Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Divine Love, [al-Azhar, 1938]), remains the most comprehensive study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life and faith. While admiring Ibn al-Fāriḍ's literary talents, Ḥilmī was primarily interested in the personal experiences that lay beneath the verse. Following Nicholson and Nallino, Ḥilmī asserted that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was without doubt the unrivaled Arabic mystical poet of Islam. But, as Ḥilmī saw it, love of absolute beauty, not theological dogma, inspired the poet; his use of technical terminology—whether from Ibn al-ʿArabī or someone else—does not reflect Ibn al-Fāriḍ's theological positions but, rather, the inability of language to capture his mystical experiences.⁵¹

Ḥilmī's dissertation was published in 1945 and reissued in 1971 and 1985. He wrote a second book on the poet, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: sultān al-ʿāshiqīn* (Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sultan of the Lovers), which was a more popular treatment of his earlier work, and he again summarized his opinions on Ibn al-Fāriḍ in a general study of Sufism.⁵² All three books have been widely read in Egypt, and Ḥilmī's influence on later studies of Ibn al-Fāriḍ has been considerable. Though recent scholars have taken more literary approaches to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his verse, the romantic image of him as a poet consumed by divine love and absolute beauty has rarely been challenged. Freed for the most part from the taint of Ibn al-ʿArabī and shorn of fabulous tales, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, the mystical poet, has earned a place among Egypt's literary and spiritual forefathers.⁵³

The Saint's Appeal

But Ibn al-Fāriḍ's reputation as a saint, though faded, has weathered the twentieth century, as Sufism, its orders, and its saints have endured to administer to the religious needs of many Muslims. Sufism's ascetic and otherworldly values may rationalize a trying life and assure individuals of their ultimate worth, while rituals and ceremonies performed in mosques and shrines still function as essential social and emotional outlets. The saints and their blessings offer people hope amid difficult circumstances and make a desperate situation tolerable with the prospect of spiritual aid in this world and compensation in the next. The saints' days and other festivals are great public and social occasions, but, more, they remain as opportunities to gain heavenly intercession in earthly affairs.⁵⁴

Within this world faith in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's miracles has persisted,⁵⁵ and for nearly two decades the Rifā'i Sufi order petitioned the Egyptian government for the right to hold a *mawlid*. Finally, in 1981 they were granted permission to hold the event. The new *mawlid* may have been part of a government plan to celebrate the eight hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the poet's birth; a postage stamp was issued to commemorate Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and the Ministry of Culture announced a special evening of cultural events, including readings from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry, to be held at the shrine.⁵⁶ But the publicized event did not take place, perhaps lost in the confusion following President Anwar Sadat's assassination a few months after the announcement. The new Mubarak administration may have felt that a more neutral stance on religious activities was needed in the wake of the Muslim reactionaries' attack on Sadat.

But, whatever the reason, the *mawlid* had been approved, and it was held. This celebration and three subsequent ones were under the jurisdiction of the Rifā'i *khalīfah* (deputy), Shaykh Gād Salīm Gād. The shaykh had been the caretaker of the shrine since the early 1960s, and in May 1981 he was officially recognized as the *khalīfah* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's tomb by the Supreme Sufi Council (al-Majlis al-Šūfi al-A'lā), a government organization in charge of regulating Sufi affairs. Shaykh Gād also served as *imām* of the mosque. Shortly before noon on Fridays he would give the call to prayer, lead the prayer, and give a short sermon to the congregation of about thirty-five people. Then, typically, a session was held in which some of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse would be recited. On occasion the shaykh and his Rifā'i companions were invited to other mosques to perform their rituals, but the event everyone anticipated was the *mawlid*.⁵⁷

Similar to past *mawlids* at the shrine, recent celebrations of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's saint's day include modest communal meals, prayers, and the recitation of sections of the Qur'ān. In addition, Rifā'i Sufis perform their

dhikr, and some members dramatically reveal the depth of their trance by piercing their cheeks with large needles (*dabbūs*) without showing pain.⁵⁸ But the climax of the event is the singing of selections from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry, especially the *al-Tāʾrīyah al-kubrā*, which, on occasion, has been performed by the popular Sufi singer Yā Sīn al-Ṭuhāmai. His gripping performance, and those like it by other singers, allows even the illiterate to experience the beauty of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse as others had in centuries past. Many devotees record the performance, and the audience fills the mosque and overflows into the courtyard and beyond, where festivities continue.⁵⁹

In contrast to this lively affair, a normal day at the mosque is quite tranquil. A few pilgrims visit the shrine, circumambulate the grave, pray there, and recite something from the Qurʾān. They ask God to bless his saint and then ask Ibn al-Fāriḍ's blessing. Sometimes a pilgrim may have a specific request of the saint, while others come to thank him for a received blessing. One middle-aged woman visited the shrine to thank Ibn al-Fāriḍ for helping her to conceive and successfully deliver her only child.

Sometimes entire families come on pilgrimage. Most pilgrims are from the lower-middle and lower economic classes. A few of the men wear Western-style clothes, but the majority wear the traditional *jallābīyah*. The women invariably wear very conservative traditional dress, which covers their arms and heads, though they are rarely veiled. Women are welcome at the shrine, where they may participate in prayers and other ceremonies within their own curtained area in the mosque and next to the grave.

Shaykh Gād, who labored so hard on the saint's behalf, lived with his wife, Umm ʿUmar, and their children in a humble dwelling within the courtyard of Jamīlah Hānum's crypt, adjacent to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's mosque. Their life-style was extremely frugal, if not impoverished. Then, in 1984, the elderly shaykh died unexpectedly, and a new *imām* was appointed to the mosque. Since this *imām* is not a resident of the area, he usually comes to the mosque only on Thursdays and Fridays to lead the prayers. Alms and gifts to the shrine have decreased, and the sessions and recitations of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry are held only during the *mawlid*.

Shaykh Gād left Umm ʿUmar with six children, the youngest being about three months old at that time. Umm ʿUmar was able to retain the family's apartment next to the shrine, and she continues to earn some income by selling soft drinks and a few toys from a roadside stand. Although the family is no longer in official control of the shrine, the two oldest sons are members of the Rifāʿī order there and actively participate in the *mawlid*. Now, nearly ten years after Shaykh Gād's passing, Umm

‘Umar still mourns the loss of her husband, and she worries about the uncertain future of her family. But Umm ‘Umar puts her trust in God, holding fast to her faith in Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who she believes will in time bring her and her family ease after hardship.

Epilogue

Tales of the Beloved

‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ lived over eight centuries ago, and, though he is remembered as a pious man, it is his mystical verse that has insured him lasting fame. Students preserved his poems, which were later collected by his grandson ‘Alī, and upon this poetic foundation ‘Alī and others built Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s saintly image. Historical realities were covered by the miraculous, and ‘Umar the poet was enveloped by Shaykh ‘Umar, the blessed saint of God.

Credited with miracles, as are all Muslim saints, Ibn al-Fāriḍ soon took his place among Cairo’s spiritual elect. Yet, in contrast to the vast majority of other Muslim saints who have been invoked by many in times of worldly need, Ibn al-Fāriḍ became the patron saint of a religious and cultural elite in search of mystical union with God. While few such seekers were believed to have ever attained their goal, fewer still returned to tell. But Shaykh ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ had returned, and many of his devotees discovered in his verse intimations of ecstasy and a guide for their mystic way.

Yet Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s special status among many of this elite was opposed by others, who saw him as emblematic of spiritual pride and hubris. These religious scholars endeavored to maintain the primacy of communal law over individual inspiration and saintly intercession, and they vociferously denounced Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verse and his cult while asserting their own religious and social authority. But such opposition was thwarted by the saint’s popular appeal, his loyal supporters, and their political backing. Patronized by Mamluk and Ottoman rulers, Shaykh ‘Umar’s shrine became a gathering place for all of Cairo’s classes and, by the seventeenth century, a mosque for weekly worship unsurpassed in all of Egypt.

Then Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s saintly powers began to wane, along with Egypt’s political and economic condition, and his stately shrine became a ruined tomb. Precisely because of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s intimate associations with the

cultured and ruling elite, his reputation as a saint has in recent years declined rapidly, as secularization and Western acculturation among the upper classes demand new models and patrons. While some in Egypt continue to venerate Ibn al-Fāriḍ at his humble mosque in Cairo, he has yielded his saintly rank to others, such as al-Sayyid al-Badawī and al-Sayyidah Nafisah, who have long been associated with the wretched of the earth.

Passion before Me, Fate Behind

Still, as a holy saint, ecstatic mystic, and master poet, Ibn al-Fāriḍ is a vital part of Egypt's life and society, and his poetry—that first proof of his sainthood—remains meaningful in an increasingly secular age. As Shakespeare's work has permeated English thought and language, so too has Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse become embedded in Egyptian culture. The current energy of his poetry can be heard in the popular songs of Sufi singers and seen in the work of the Egyptian Nobel laureate, Naguib Mahfouz (b. 1911).

In his short story "Zaʿbalāwī" Mahfouz recounts one man's quest to find a saint who can cure an unnamed illness. While searching for the elusive Zaʿbalāwī, the narrator meets a famous singer and composer, Shaykh Gād. He has been a companion of the saint, and when Zaʿbalāwī is near songs come easily. But the saint has not visited him for some time; Shaykh Gād knows the narrator's suffering. Inspired by the mere thought of Zaʿbalāwī, Shaykh Gād picks up his lute and sings a verse by Ibn al-Fāriḍ:¹

Pass round remembrance of one I love,
though that be to blame me,
for tales of the beloved
are my wine.

His spirits raised, the narrator leaves the shaykh to continue his quest for an eventual encounter with the saint.²

Mahfouz probably modeled his Shaykh Gād on popular Sufi singers such as Yā Sīn Tuhāmai, whose songs draw extensively from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry. But Mahfouz may have had the caretaker of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine in mind when naming his singer, and another of his characters, an elderly shaykh, leads a Sufi *dhikr* ceremony with recitation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse, in the celebrated novel *The Thief and the Dogs* (*al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb*).

The antihero of this existential piece is a thief, Saʿīd Mahrān, who is released from prison when a general amnesty is declared to mark an

anniversary of the 1952 Egyptian revolution. Sa'īd tries to adjust to society and lead an honest life, but his efforts are to no avail, as he learns that his wife has divorced him and married his best friend, another thief. Enraged, Sa'īd rushes to avenge himself against his betrayers, but he hopelessly fails and, in the process, mistakenly murders two other persons instead. He is relentlessly stalked by the police, who, in the end, bring him down and kill him.

The Thief and the Dogs can be read as a critique of the 1952 revolution, an expression of Mahfouz's frustration and disillusionment with the failure of Egypt's leaders and people to live up to their espoused ideals. Sa'īd, the rebel who wants to change history and society, becomes a victim of both. But the story goes deeper than social criticism to pose questions about the human condition and the search for meaning in life. Sa'īd struggles with himself and others to live an authentic life, but those he loves most betray him one by one, until, finally, he too gives up the quest, betrays himself, and dies.³

The Thief and the Dogs bears formal and thematic similarities to Albert Camus's *L'Étranger*, and Mahfouz appears to have been heavily influenced by Camus's philosophical reflections as well. Yet, when Mahfouz seals Sa'īd's fate and draws his conclusions about personal existence and the human tragedy, he turns to Sufism and Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Sa'īd has been hiding in the home of an elderly shaykh, and, when he awakes there on the last evening of his life, he hears the sounds of a *dhikr* ceremony:⁴

Outside, he heard hands clapping. Then they were quiet, as were the men's voices, and the splendor of silence prevailed. The shaykh 'Alī al-Junaydī repeated "Allah" three times, and the others repeated the call in a chant that brought to his mind the dancing movement of the *dhikr*. "Allah . . . Allah . . . Allah." The chant grew faster and louder then dropped off with increased speed like the sound of a rushing train. It continued without interruption for sometime. Gradually, it began to weaken; the rhythm softened and slowed. Finally, it was carried away and plunged into silence. Then a melodious voice rang out, chanting:⁵

Oh, time has perished,
and I failed,
my beloveds,
to find you.

But when is there hope of a respite
for one whose life is but two days:

a day of rejection
and one of separation?

Sighs arose everywhere. Then another voice sang out:⁶

And sufficient torment it is
that I pass the night enslaved by love,
my passion before me,
fate behind.

Betrayed, and haunted by treachery, Saʿīd Mahrān applies Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse to his own desperate situation:⁷

And when is there hope of a respite, and time has perished,
and I failed, and fate is behind me? But this hot pistol in my
pocket has a job. It must triumph over treachery and corrup-
tion; for the first time the thief will stalk the dogs!

Mahfouz's use of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry to build to the climax of *The Thief and the Dogs* is a logical choice. The opening section (*nasīb*) of the Arabic ode from which Mahfouz drew the first two verses has a pronounced elegiac tone and mood. The sense of loss and despair predominate, as the poet, in a state of reverie, longs for his departed lover, whether she be a woman of flesh and blood, a symbol for God, or a paradise lost. Similarly, the last verse quoted by Mahfouz was taken from the end of this ode, in which the elegiac qualities return in a final expression of the poet's deepest feelings. To succinctly and aesthetically convey the existential tragedy, Naguib Mahfouz reached back to the Arabic ode and its classic statements on the human condition.

Mahfouz elaborates on the existential situation by contrasting Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses and their recitation by the Sufis to Saʿīd Mahrān's interpretation of them. Like Saʿīd, the Sufis face the dilemma of life, which leads only to death; they too have sought an escape. But, confronted with the harsh reality of the final separation, they accept their fate and concede that life is a mystery to be lived and not, as Saʿīd seems to assert, a problem to be solved. The poet and the Sufis bear their burden, but Saʿīd Mahrān refuses and is destroyed.

From his twentieth-century perspective Mahfouz clearly does not view Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poems as the inspired oracles of an ecstatic saint but, rather, as profound descriptions of humanity's existential state. And, so, we have come full circle—from Ibn al-Fāriḍ the poet to the saint and back again. Like earlier admirers of the poet, whether his students,

commentators, grandson, or later opponents and devotees, Mahfouz has read Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse in light of his own personal concerns. These varied contextual readings of Ibn al-Fāriḍ—as a poet, Sufi, and saint—have led his many interpreters to find new meanings that the original poet and his verse could have contained only *in potentia*. Such rereadings and reinterpretations of poetry, its constant application to changing needs and circumstance, determine its lasting quality and continued relevance. Thus, late in the twentieth century this thirteenth-century Muslim persists both through the power of his poetry and the belief in his sanctity.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbāʾ al-ḥaṣr*, edited by Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1970), 190.

2. Concerning this *ḥadīth*, see William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 173–74. For more on the term *walī*, see Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 15:406–15; Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, edited and translated by S. M. Stern and C. R. Barber (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967–71), 2:263; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed. (= *EII*) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1913–34), 4:1109; Frederick M. Denny, “God’s Friends: The Sanctity of Persons in Islam,” in *Sainthood*, edited by Richard Kieckhefer and George D. Bond (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 70–71; and Michel Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des saints* (France: Éditions Gallimard, 1986), 29–39.

3. ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Nābulusī, *al-Ḥaqīqah wa-al-majāz*, edited by Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Majīd Harīdī (Cairo: al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1982), 280.

4. For a survey of Sufism, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

5. See Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī, *al-Taʿarruf li-madḥhab ahl al-taṣawwuf* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah, 1980), 71–79 (translated by A. J. Arberry as *The Doctrine of the Sūfīs* [1935; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978], 57–66); Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 4 vols. (Cairo: ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1957), esp. v. 4; and ʿAlī ibn ʿUthmān al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, translated by R. A. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1911), 210–41. Also see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 199–213; Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2:254–341; *EII*, 4:1009–11; Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Y. Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany: State University of New York, 1981), 183–91, 241–43; Denny, “God’s Friends,” 69–97; John Alden Williams, *Themes of*

Islamic Civilization (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 307–70; and esp. see Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau*, 18–64, for an analytical survey of the terms *walī* and *wilāyah/walāyah* and their uses among the Sufis beginning with al-Tirmidhī (d. 285/898).

6. For more on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Dīwān* and verse, see my forthcoming study of his poetry, *Passion before Me, Fate Behind: Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Mystical Verse*; R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (1921; reprint, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1978), 162–266; A. J. Arberry, *The Mystical Poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, 2 vols. (London: Emery Walker, 1952–56); Arberry, *The Poem of the Way* (London: Emery Walker, 1952); and also see chap. 4 of the present study.

7. For more on the classical Arabic ode, see Michael A. Sells, *Desert Tracings* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

8. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, edited by 'Abd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd ('Abd al-Khāliq) (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1984) 179–80; my translation and analysis differ substantially from Arberry's (*Mystical Poems*, 2:95–97).

9. In this light v. 13 may also allude to contact with the divine, since, according to Islamic tradition, dreams are the remnants of prophecy after Muhammad's death. See Graham, *Divine Word*, 37. Concerning the significance and evolution of the dream phantom, see Ḥasan 'Izz al-Dīn, *al-Ṭayf wa-l-khiyāl fī al-shī'r al-'Arabī al-qadīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Nadīm, 1988).

10. For more on this important saying, see Graham, *Divine Word*, 173–74; and Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 43, 133, 144, 277.

11. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, 205, v. 1.

12. See Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), regarding Muhammad's place in Islamic religious life.

13. Concerning traditions of meditation and their impact on verse, see Louis L. Martz's ground-breaking study of Elizabethan religious literature, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2d ed., 1962). I wish to thank Frederick Denny for bringing my attention to this work.

14. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, 189. Concerning *dhikr* and the covenant, see, for example, al-Kalābādhī, *Doctrine*, 166–67. For more on *dhikr* within the Sufi tradition, see Jean Duing, *Musique et extase* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1988), 31–35, 156–73; and Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 167–78.

15. For a close reading and analysis of the *al-Khamrīyah* and interpretations of it, see Homerin, *Passion before Me*.

16. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, 114.

17. Ibid., 134–35. For more on *samā'*, see al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf*, 393–420;

and the comprehensive work by During, *Musique*. Also see Earle H. Waugh, *The Munshidīn of Egypt* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 23–31; and Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 178–86.

Chapter 1: Metamorphosis

1. Al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah li-Wafayāt al-naqalah*, edited by Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Cairo: ‘Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1968), 6:135. Surprisingly, al-Mundhirī’s accounts of the poet have not been cited previously in twentieth-century scholarship on Ibn al-Fāriḍ, including Muhammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī’s pioneering study of the poet’s life and work, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ wa-al-ḥubb al-ilāhī* (2d ed. [Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1971]). For al-Mundhirī, see ‘Umar Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu‘jam al-mu‘allifīn* (Damascus: al-Maktabah al-‘Arabīyah, 1957), 5:264–65.

2. For al-Qāsim Ibn ‘Asākir, see the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed. (= *EI2*) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954–), 3:714.

3. Cited in ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Fayyūmī, *Nathr al-jumān fī tarājīm al-a‘yān*, microfilm 287 (Ta’rīkh), Cairo: Arab League Manuscript Institute, of MS 1746, Istanbul: Maktabat Aḥmad al-Thālith, 70b. The title *Mu‘jam* is clearly written in this unique manuscript, but the author’s name is difficult to decipher. The author was definitely a student of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, however, and al-Mundhirī did write a work entitled *Mu‘jam al-shuyūkh* in which he mentioned Ibn al-Fāriḍ; see Kātib Āḍadī, *Kashf al-ṣunūn* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbassī, 1941), 2:1735; and al-Dhahabī, who quoted from al-Mundhirī’s account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ in the *Mu‘jam*, in his *Ta’rīkh al-Islām wa-ṭabaqāt al-mashāhīr wa-al-a‘lām*, microfilm 1033 (Ta’rīkh), Cairo: Arab League Manuscript Institute, of MS 2917, Istanbul: Maktabat Aḥmad al-Thālith, 17:59b. Further, the author’s name in Fayyūmī’s manuscript appears to be either Ibn Sa‘d or Ibn Sa‘īd, and both could be used to refer to al-Mundhirī, whose full name was ‘Abd al-‘Azīm ibn ‘Abd al-Qūwī ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Salāmāh *ibn Sa‘d ibn Sa‘īd* al-Mundhirī. Whatever the case, this account is by some student of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, which is the crucial point.

4. Quoted by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *Husn al-Muḥāḍarah* (Cairo: ‘Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1967), 1:518. Like al-Mundhirī’s similar work, Yahyā al-‘Aṭṭār entitled his collection *Mu‘jam al-shuyūkh*.

5. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān wa-anbā’ an-bā’ al-zamān*, edited by Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1968), 3:454–56. Ibn Khallikān completed his biography of the poet by 655/1257; see I. J. Boullata, “Toward a Biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ,” *Arabica* 38 (1981): 38. My translation of Ibn Khallikān’s biography differs in several places from that of MacGuckin de Slane in his work *Ibn Khallikan’s*

Biographical Dictionary (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842–71), 2:338–40.

6. This is Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tāʾrīyah al-kubrā*.

7. Vv. 43–44 of the poet's *al-Jīmīyah*.

8. Vv. 8–9 of the poet's *al-Fāʾrīyah*.

9. V. 43 of the poet's *al-Fāʾrīyah*.

10. The satirical *al-Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122) was read by every respectable Arab litterateur; see *EI2*, 3:221–22.

11. Issa J. Boullata has noted:

In many Arab countries, butchers still actually [inflate] a slaughtered animal by mouth from a hole made in the skin of the lower part of the leg in order to make the flaying easier by separating the skin from the flesh by the air blown in. ("Toward a Biography," 40 n. 5)

12. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dirwān*, 223. ʿAlī cited this couplet on the authority of al-Mundhirī.

13. That is, the settlements in matters of inheritance, divorce, and related issues.

14. For a later mystical interpretation of these verses, see chap. 3 of the present study.

15. Ibn Khallikān was quite fond of the poetry by Ibn ʿUnayn, whom he considered the last of the great poets. Ibn Khallikān also spoke appreciatively of the verse by his two friends, Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zuhayr and Ibn Maṭrūḥ; *Wafayāt*, 5:14–19, 2:332–38, 6:258–66. For a biography by Ibn Khallikān of a Sufi, see his account of ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, 3:446–48.

16. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, edited by Sven Dederer et al. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981), 4:263.

17. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, in Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dirwān*, 19–44. For an evaluation of the *Dibājah* and an analysis of these and other stories, see chap. 2 of the present study.

18. The biographer Jaʿfar al-Udfuwī numbered Ibn al-Najjār among Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *ḥadīth* students; see al-Udfuwī, *al-Badr al-sāfir fī uns al-musāfir*, microfilm 81 (Tāʾrīkh), Cairo: Arab League Manuscript Institute, of MS 4201, Istanbul: Maktabat Fathī, 42b–43a. For Ibn al-Najjār, see *EI2*, 3:896–97.

19. Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn, *Dirāsāt fī al-shīʿr fī ʿaṣr al-Ayyūbiyyīn* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1957), 86–98. Also see Jawdat Rikābī, *La Poésie profane sous Les Ayyūbides et ses principaux représentants* (Paris: G.-P. Masionneuve, 1949). For Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk, see *EI2*, 3:929.

20. For example, Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk became a judge, while Ibn 'Unayn, Bahā' al-Dīn Zuhayr, and Ibn Maṭrūḥ all became viziers. Such poets of the Ayyubid court were part of the Dīwān al-Inshā', or "Ministry of Composition," a kind of information agency, which assured their rulers that eloquent and favorable opinions of the regime would be available at a moment's notice; see Rikābī, *Poésie*, 61–63. For earlier examples of political panegyric, see Stefan Sperl, "Islamic Kingship and Arabic Panegyric Poetry in the Early 9th Century," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 8 (1977): 20–35; and Suzanne P. Stetkevych, "The Abbasid Poet Interprets History: Three *Qaṣīdahs* by Abū Tammām," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 10 (1983): 49–64.

21. Concerning al-Malik al-Kāmil, see *EI* 3:204–5; and Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 5:89–92.

22. The importance of poetry to medieval Arabic culture can hardly be overestimated; see Vincente Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 20–26; and *EI* 2, 1:175–76. On learning poetry, see Ibn Shuhayd al-Andalusī, *Risālat At-Tawābī' wa Z-Zawābī'*, translated by James T. Monroe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), esp. 45–46 n. 123; and Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, edited and translated by Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 3:300–304, 307–8, 382–87, 392–95.

23. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, 20. For Ibn al-A'mā, see Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirat al-nabih fi ayām al-Manṣūr wa banih*, edited by Muḥammad Muḥammad Amin, revised by Sa'īd Ashūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1976), 1:165–66. For more on the *rāwī* and oral dimensions of Arabic poetry, see Michael Zwettler, *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978).

24. Al-Rāshidī, *Ijāzah*, translated by Mohammed Ben Cheneb, *Actes XIVe Congrès International des Orientalistes, Algiers, 1905*, 3:3 sec. 2:208. Al-Suyūṭī also traced one of his *ijāzahs* for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Yā'fiyah* to al-Mundhirī; see al-Suyūṭī's *al-Barq al-wāmiq fi sharḥ Yā'fiyat Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, MS 224 (Adab), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 4b. Concerning the institution of *ijāzah*, see *EI* 2, 2:1021; and Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2:176–80.

25. See *EI* 2, 3:811–12, which incorrectly names Yaḥyā al-Suhrwardī as one of Ibn Isrā'īl's Sufi mentors in place of 'Umar al-Suhrawardī, with whom Ibn Isrā'īl spent some time.

26. Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi*, 4:50–61.

27. For the most detailed account of the dispute, see *ibid.*, 4:50–56.

28. *Ibid.*, 4:53.

29. Al-Ṣafadī (*ibid.*, 4:54) further related that, when Ibn Isrā'īl was

asked later about the dispute, he conceded that “Ibn al-Khiyamī is an outstanding poet. He took a novel theme [*man‘ā*] and improved upon it without going to excess.” Leaving aside the question of authorship, this verse may have been a conscious variation on the theme in a verse by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, whom both poets admired and imitated (*Dīwān*, 190, v. 28):

And I pity the lightning, flashing at night,
claiming descent from his mouth,
while being put to shame
by his bright white teeth.

30. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta‘rīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, edited by Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amrikānīyah, 1936), 8:43.

31. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 37. The Mamluk historian Ibn Iyās claimed that Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn al-Khiyamī would converse together using mystical poetry; *Badā‘ī‘ al-zuhūr fī waqā‘ī‘ al-duhūr* (Bulāq: al-Maṭba‘ah al-kubrā al-Amīriyah, 1894), 1:81–82.

32. Al-Ṣafadī (*al-Wāfi*, 3:143) quoted one scholar as saying that Ibn Isrā‘īl composed excellent verse until he began to imitate Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s mystical poetry. Also see Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta‘rīkh*, 8:131; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Mizān* (Haydarabad: Maṭba‘at Majlis Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Nizāmīyah, 1911), 5:195; and Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa-al-nihāyah fī al-ta‘rīkh* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Sa‘ādah, 1932), 13:283.

33. Abū al-Fidā, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar* (Egypt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Ḥasanīyah al-Miṣriyah, 1907), 3:157. Concerning this work and its author, see *EI2*, 1:118–19. For a similar evaluation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, see Ibn al-Ṣabūnī (d. 680/1282), *Takhmīlah Ikmāl al-ikmāl*, edited by Muṣṭafā Jawād (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-Majma‘ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Irāqī, 1957), 270.

34. Al-Qūṣī, *Kitāb al-Wahīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd*, MS 2448 (Taṣawwuf), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 2:73b–74a. For al-Qūṣī, see Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu‘jam*, 5:267; and Denis Gril, “Une Source inédite pour l’histoire du taṣawwuf en Egypte au VII/XIIIs,” *Livre du centenaire de l’IFAO* (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archeologie Orientale, 1980), 441–508. For more on *samā‘*, see n. 17 of the introduction to the present study.

35. For these and other Sufi technical terms, see al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*, edited by ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd Ibn al-Sharīf (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1972–74), 1:201–3, 209–12.

36. Al-Qūṣī, *al-Wahīd*, 2:73b. For a biography of al-Munūfī, see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāminah* (Haydarabad: n.p., 1929), 2:373–75. Ibn Ḥajar noted that al-Munūfī had studied with the great Sufi Ibn al-‘Arabī.

37. That is, the mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ.

38. Al-Bahnasā is in Middle Egypt about two hundred kilometers south of Cairo; see *EI2*, 1:926.

39. Al-Qūṣī, *al-Wahīd*, 2:73b–74a.

40. See During, *Musique*, esp. 15–18, 88–91, for more on the reciprocal relationship between aesthetic and ecstatic states.

41. Al-Farghānī, *Muntahā al-mudārīk*, microfilm 519 (Taṣawwuf), Cairo: Arab League Manuscript Institute, of MS 1499 Istanbul: Maktabat Aḥmad al-Thālith, 1b–2a. Also see Kaḥḥālāh, *Muʿjam*, 8:307.

42. For example, al-Farghānī, *Muntahā*, 32b ff.

43. Maḥmūd al-Kāshānī, *Kashf wujūh al-ghurr li-maʿānī Naẓm al-durr*, microfilm of MS 4106 (3879), Princeton: Yahuda Section, Garrett Collection, Princeton University, 4b. Maḥmūd al-Kāshānī, or al-Kāshī, has frequently been confused with ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, a commentator on the works of Ibn al-ʿArabī, who died the same year as Maḥmūd; see Kātib ʿĀlebī, *Kashf*, 1:266; R. A. Nicholson, *Studies*, 162, 193–94; and I. J. Boullata, “Verbal Arabesque and Mystical Union: A Study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s ‘Al-Taʿīyya al-Kubra,’” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3 (1981): 152–53. For a fine study of Maḥmūd Kāshānī’s life and beliefs, see Jalāl al-Dīn Humāʾī’s introduction to his edition of Maḥmūd’s *Kitāb-i Miṣbāḥ al-hidāyah* (Tehran: Kitābkhānah-i Ṣanāʿī, 1946), 13–47.

44. Dāʾūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣīdah al-Khamrīyah*, MS 7761 (Adab), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 320–21. Most authorities give al-Qayṣarī’s probable date of death as 751/1350 (see, e.g., Kaḥḥālāh, *Muʿjam*, 3:142). However, MS 4802 (Adab Ṭalʿat), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1b, 100a, is dated 747/1346, and the scribe speaks of al-Qayṣarī as if the latter were already deceased.

45. Al-Kāshānī, *Kashf wujūh*, 4b. Also see the Qurʾān 2:23 and 9:13.

46. Al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Tāʾīyat al-sulūk*, MS 4802 (Adab Ṭalʿat), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 3a–b.

47. S. H. Nasr, “Rumi and the Sufi Tradition,” in *The Scholar and the Saint*, edited by Peter Chelkowski (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 175.

48. For more on Ibn al-ʿArabī, see *EI2*, 3:707–11; and William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

49. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, 27–28 (with the MS variant: *ladunīyan* for *ladaynā*). The seventeenth-century bibliographer Kātib ʿĀlebī added that al-Qūnawī’s commentaries were, in fact, readings from Ibn al-ʿArabī’s commentary on the poem, which was supposed to have filled five notebooks then in al-Qūnawī’s possession; *Kashf*, 1:265–66. For similar apocryphal tales regarding Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn al-ʿArabī, see chap. 4 of the present study.

50. See what may be al-Qūnawī's introduction to al-Farghānī's Persian commentary, *Mashārīq al-darārī*, edited by Sa'īd Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Mashhad: Dānishghāh-i Firdawsī, 1980), 5–6; al-Kāshānī, *Kashf wujūh*, 6a–24b; and al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣīdah al-Khamrīyah*, 320–30. Also see Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu'jam*, 9:43; and William Chittick, "The Five Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī," *Muslim World* 72 (1982): 107–28.

51. The exact meaning of these and related theological and mystical terms depends on their specific definition and use in any given work. For a discussion of *ḥulūl* and *ittiḥād*, see *EI2*, 3:570–71; 4:282–83. Concerning opposition to these doctrines, also see Th. Emil Homerin, "Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Ṣūfīyah wa-al-fuqarā'*," *Arabica* 32 (1985): 219–44; and my review of Chittick's *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60, no. 1 (1992): 147–50.

52. Al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Tā'īyat Ibn al-Fāriḍ al-kubrā*, MS 1328 (Taṣawwuf Ṭal'at), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1b–5a. For this dispute, see chap. 2 of the present study.

53. See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj*, translated by Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 2:309–13.

54. Al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Tā'īyat*, 5a.

55. See Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī, *al-Radd al-kāshif li-murād ahl al-ittiḥād*, microfilm of MS 2040, Leiden: Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, 150b, 158b, 168b; and al-Biqā'ī's *Kitāb al-Nāfiq bi-al-ṣawāb al-fāriḍ lil-tafkīr Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, microfilm of MS Arabici, 1:68–69 (Marsh. 642), Oxford: Bodleian Library, 123b–125a, 151b. For more on Ibn Ḥamdān, see Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu'jam*, 1:211.

56. Abū Ḥayyān's censure of the poet came in the former's work *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*; see Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, *al-Ghayth al-ʿarīḍ fī mu'āraḍat Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, microfilm 319 (Taṣawwuf), Cairo: Arab League Manuscript Institute of MS 31 (Adab), Sūhāj, Egypt: Maktabat Sūhāj, 111–12; al-Biqā'ī, *al-Radd*, 63b; and his work *al-Nāfiq*, 278b; also see Massignon, *Passion*, 2:312–15. For more on Abū Ḥayyān, see Th. Emil Homerin, "A Bird Ascends the Night: Elegy and Immortality in Islam," *Journal for the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991): 247–79.

57. Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Furqān bayna awliyā' al-Raḥmān wa-awliyā' al-Shayṭān* (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1962), 106–7. The verses of which he disapproved were 152–54, 216, 263, 460. On Ibn Taymiyyah, see *EI2*, 3:951–54; and Homerin, "Ibn Taymiyya."

58. Ibn Taymiyyah, "*Fī ibtāl waḥdat al-wujūd*," *Majmū'at al-rasā'il wa-al-masā'il*, edited by Muhammad Rashīd Ridā (1922; reprint, Cairo: Lajnat al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1976), 1:66–68.

59. See Ibn al-Ahdal, *Kashf al-ghītā' ʿan ḥaqā'iq al-tawḥīd* (Tunis:

Aḥmad Bakīr, 1964), 201; and al-Biqā'ī, *al-Nāṭiq*, 278a. For Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, see Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu'jam*, 5:249.

Chapter 2: Sanctification

1. We know very little about 'Alī, whose mother was a daughter of the poet. 'Alī's intercession on behalf of the judge Ibn Bint al-A'azz in 693/1294 suggests that 'Alī was a man of some consequence at that time. Further, 'Alī mentioned the date 735/1334 in his *Dibājah*. Recently, I discovered that the Mamluk historian and biographer 'Alī ibn Muhammad al-Fayyūmī (d. 770/1369) was an occasional companion of 'Alī, whom he named as Abū al-Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Miṣrī, known as Ibn al-Fāriḍ. Al-Fayyūmī also noted that 'Alī was a shaykh of a mosque in the al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh section of Cairo. Since al-Fayyūmī added the customary formula for the deceased after 'Alī's name, we can deduce that 'Alī died prior to 770/1369, the year of al-Fayyūmī's death; see al-Fayyūmī's *Nathr al-jumān*, 2:70a. For al-Fayyūmī, see Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu'jam*, 7:223.

2. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, 42.

3. Among recent scholars of the poet A. J. Arberry has observed that much of the *Dibājah* is "made up of more or less miraculous anecdotes calculated to provoke wonder rather than to inform"; see his book *Mystical Poems*, 2:8. More recently, in a useful study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography, Issa J. Boullata ("Biography," 43–44) asserts that defensiveness taints the entire *Dibājah*:

['Alī's] attitude of defensiveness and exonerative justification has lent his biographical materials a certain bias that must be guarded against. Worse still in my view is that it permitted him to interpret certain events in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's life which, if at all historical, are calculated to endow his grandfather with supposedly supernatural or even miraculous powers that are intended to endear him to Ṣūfis and at least justify him to other believers.

Boullata's statement is a pertinent note of caution to those who would read 'Alī's work as a primary source for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's biography; yet this is to misread the *Dibājah*, which 'Alī intended as hagiography, not biography.

4. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, 21–22.

5. Ibid., 22.

6. See Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam* (1957; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 339–40.

7. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 22–23. The Suyūfiyah was the first Ḥanafī law school in Egypt; it was established by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiḡ wa-al-ʾiṭibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1970), 2:365–66.

8. For similar Islamic examples of mystical conversion, see Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d.c. 617/1220), *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, partially translated by A. J. Arberry as *Muslim Saints and Mystics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 22–23, 81–83, 88–90; Goldziher, *Studies*, 2:269; and al-Qūṣī's story in chap. 1 of the present study.

9. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 23. These are vv. 30 and 32 from Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Dāʿiyah*; "Abraham's Station" is a holy site located adjacent to the Ka'bah. For an analysis of both verses in context of the larger poem, see my forthcoming study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse, *Passion before Me*.

10. Tame or friendly lions are often found in accounts of Muslim saints; see Goldziher, *Studies*, 2:269; and al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā* (Cairo: Muṣṭafa al-Bāb al-Ḥalabī, 1978), 1:545–49.

11. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 23–24. Concerning soul birds in Muslim folk beliefs and legends, see Ignaz Goldziher, "L'Oiseau representant l'âme dans les croyances populaires des Musulmans," in *Études islamologiques d'Ignaz Goldziher*, edited and translated by G.-H. Bousquet (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), 77–80.

12. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 24–25. Al-Kalābādhī claims that the true saint does not become proud when miracles occur to him; rather, his humility and obedience to God's will increase (*al-Taʿarruf*, 73 [Arberry trans., *Doctrines*, 57]).

13. Boullata, "Biography," 45–46. For more on the site, see Th. Emil Homerin, "The Domed Shrine of Ibn al-Fāriḍ," *Annales Islamologiques* 25 (1990): 133–38.

14. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 25–26. Kamāl al-Dīn also noted that, when his father stood erect with his arms at his side, his long hands would reach to his knees, claiming this to be another sign of a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad.

15. Ibid., 26–27. Boullata ("Biography," 49) notes that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's dream may have represented the poet's secret desire to be related to the Prophet Muhammad. Following this pertinent observation, Boullata claims that ʿAlī's dream involving another man's lineage to Muhammad proves ʿAlī's "embellishment" of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's dream, but the basis for this claim is not clear.

16. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 27–28. ʿAlī adds that he had also heard of, but not seen, a multivolumed commentary of the *al-Taʿrīyah al-kubrā* written by the renowned scholar of law and Arabic, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (666–739/1267–1338); ʿAlī says that al-Qazwīnī's son ʿAbd

Allāh had told him about the commentary. For al-Qazwīnī, see Kaḥḥālāh, *Muʿjam*, 10:145–46.

17. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 29.

18. The “youths of the cave” refers to the story of “the Seven Sleepers” found in 18:10–27 of the Qurʾān.

19. Concerning the *kāhin*, or pre-Islamic Arab “diviner,” see *EI2*, 4:420–22. For Muhammad and his revelatory experiences, see the Qurʾān 73:1, 74:1; Ibn Ishāq, *Sīrat al-nabī*, edited by Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣabīḥ and Sons, 1971), 1:155, translated by A. Guillaume as *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 106; and Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qurʾān* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 92–100.

20. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 30; and see Boullata (“Biography,” 49), who believes that the two accounts of the dream are meant to defend the poem against its critics. This is definitely a factor in al-Tilimsānī’s use of the dream (see chap. 1), though I am not convinced that this is its main goal in the *Dībājah* or the anonymous anthology of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verse from which ʿAlī quotes his second version. Like ʿAlī, the unnamed editor was concerned with the subject of inspiration, since he followed his recounting of the dream with a word on Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s ecstatic method of composition:

A trusted group of [Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s] companions and confidants related that he did not compose [the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*] in the way poets compose their poems. Rather, spiritual raptures [*jadhabāt*] would occur to him, he becoming senseless during them for about a week or ten days. Then he would recover and dictate what God had enlightened him with of [the poem], about thirty, forty, or fifty verses. Then he would stop until the state returned to him.

21. For Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz’s biography, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, 13:346; al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, edited by Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1974), 2:279–82; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah al-kubrā*, edited by Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Tānāhī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw (Cairo: ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964), 8:172–75; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Nabīh*, 1:228; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah* (Cairo: al-Muʾassasah al-Miṣriyah al-ʿAmmah, 1963), 8:82–83; al-Suyūṭī, *Husn*, 1:415; and Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1931), 5:431. For al-Aykī, who was of Persian descent and competent in jurisprudence, logic, Sufism and *ḥadīth*, see al-Yāfiʿī, *Mirʾāt al-jinān* (Haydarabad: Maṭ-

ba‘at Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Niẓāmīyah, 1918), 4:229; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Nabīh*, 1:209, al-Ṣuyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 1:543; and Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 5:39.

22. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, 30.

23. Ibid., 31.

24. Ibid., 31–32.

25. The verses cited by ‘Alī from the *al-Tā’rīyah al-kubrā* were 279–85. Also see Boullata’s reference to the dispute (“Biography,” 42–43).

26. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 8:65, 71, 96, 100, 102, 106–9, 119, 122–29, 132, 153–57, 166, 170–78, 189, 205, 218; and also see al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-ma‘rifat duwal al-mulūk*, edited by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta’līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1934), 1:732, 734, 741–42, 757, 771–73, 781, 785, 798, 813, 817, 821. Much of al-Maqrīzī’s account was borrowed directly from al-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1332), *Nihāyat al-arab*, MS 549 (Ma‘ārif ‘Āmmah), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 29:52–53, 62, 77–78, 86, and 299a ff. In addition to these accounts, also see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, 13:317–22; and Abū Al-Fidā, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, 4:24, 31.

27. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 8:124; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:730, 851; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, 13:308, 311. The Ṣalāḥīyah *khānqāh*, also known as the Sa‘īd al-Su‘adā’, was established by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as the first state-sponsored Sufi institution in Egypt. The head of this prestigious establishment held the title of *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, or “shaykh of shaykhs,” though this did not grant its holder jurisdiction over other shaykhs and their centers; see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:415–16; J. Spenser Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 18; and Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 327–28.

28. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 8:124; and also see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:741–42.

29. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 8:124.

30. Ibid., 8:127; and Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, 13:322.

31. Al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 1:543.

32. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:773. For more on the issue of holding multiple positions, see Annemarie Schimmel, “Kalīf und Kāḍī,” *Die Welt des Islams* 24 (1942): 1–128, esp. 50–53; also see Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 200–274, for a detailed examination of occupational patterns among the religious and other civilian elite of the Mamluk empire.

33. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 8:123. As a prince, al-Ashraf appears to have been disliked by his father. This enmity may help to account for al-Ashraf’s feelings toward those who had been loyal to his father; see *EL*2, 4:964–65; and al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:771.

34. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 8:106–7. Originally, Ibn al-Sal‘ūs had been a

modest merchant in Damascus. Though not wealthy, he had established a good reputation as a diligent and straightforward man. He was appointed royal accountant of Damascus in 687/1288 and, subsequently, overseer of al-Malik al-Ashraf's treasury there. He substantially increased al-Ashraf's wealth through commerce and so gained his master's favor. In 689/1290 al-Ashraf awarded Ibn al-Salūs a splendid robe of honor resembling that worn by a vizier. But Qalā'un was deeply disturbed when he saw it, for, if his son had appointed a vizier for himself, that would symbolize his equality with his father in the office of sultan. Qalā'un summoned Ibn al-Salūs and rebuked him for having served al-Ashraf without sultanic decree. Qalā'un ordered the robe stripped off, and then he turned Ibn al-Salūs over to his Mamluks to be disgraced and beaten. Al-Ashraf intimidated those who sought to carry out the orders, however, and later he successfully interceded with his father on behalf of Ibn al-Salūs. Ibn al-Salūs was released, but he was dismissed from service and confined to his home until the pilgrimage month, when he was allowed to leave for the Hijaz. When Qalā'un died al-Ashraf, now sultan, immediately recalled Ibn al-Salūs from his pilgrimage and invested him with the office of vizier in 690/1291.

35. Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:173; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:772–73; and Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta'riḫh*, 8:126.

36. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta'riḫh*, 8:126; and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:173.

37. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta'riḫh*, 8:126–27; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:772–73; and Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah*, 13:322. Ibn Bint al-A'azz was reportedly fined in excess of thirty-eight thousand dinars.

38. Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:781, 785.

39. Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta'riḫh*, 8:165–71, 174–75; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:789; and also see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, 7:17–27. A key figure in these events was Qalā'un's Mamluk, Baydarā, who was vizier when Qalā'un died. Baydarā had been a protégé of Ibn Bint al-A'azz and attempted to intercede on his behalf with the new sultan, al-Ashraf. Baydarā, too, was disgraced, however, and he personally assassinated al-Ashraf. He was then proclaimed sultan, only to be killed by al-Ashraf's Mamluks (see Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jamī' al-ghurar*, edited by Ulrich Haarmann [Cairo/Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1971], 8:345–46; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:741–42, 773, 798, 821; Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta'riḫh*, 8:127, 170–71; *EI*, 4:964–65, and P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades* [New York: Longman Group Limited, 1986], 103–6).

40. 'Alī (*Dibājah*, 32) adds that he twice dreamed of the judge after their conversation:

I saw him after his death in a dream, and his face was like the moon. A light shone upon him, but he wore a filthy garment.

So I asked him about that, and he said, “This is the light of religious knowledge [*‘ilm*] and this is the garment of administering justice [*ḥukm*].”

The dream’s interpretation draws the familiar distinction between knowledge of the religious law in its abstract purity and its subsequent contamination when applied, contamination caused by compromise and intentional or accidental misapplication.

41. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, 32–34. In all five stories Ibn al-Fāriḍ experiences ecstasy by intuiting hidden mystical meanings in words or verse. Two of the tales revolve around verses previously cited in Ibn Khallikān’s biography of the poet, which ‘Alī knew; Boullata (“Biography,” 50) has pointed out the exaggerated elements of one of these stories in the *Dibājah*.

42. Throwing off one’s robe or outer garment in appreciation of verse was an ancient Arab tradition with its own set of rules among the Sufi orders; see Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb Ḍādāh al-murīdīn*, edited and partially translated by Menahem Milson as *A Sufi Rule for Novices* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 64–65. Also see Goldziher, *Studies*, 2:322; and Boullata, “Biography,” 50.

43. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, 34–35. This is v. 1 of the *al-Yā’rīyah*, which is 151 verses long.

44. If these stories involving the sultan contain any historical truth, then they must have been related to Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s son by someone at court, since he did not claim to have witnessed the events. Boullata (“Biography,” 48) believes that the sultan’s offers should be considered as “exaggeration and a craving for official recognition,” presumably on the part of ‘Alī or his uncle. However, these stories deal more explicitly with the very controversial issue of relations between pious Muslims and their worldly rulers who sought religious legitimacy and intercession.

45. For opinions on Sufi-ruler relations, see Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Sufi Rule*, 36; Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Muslim Saints*, 91–92, 136–37, 141–42, 156–57, 223–25, 238, 263; Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Fihī mā fihī*, translated by A. J. Arberry as *Discourses of Rūmī* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), 13–14, 48–53; Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1982), 262–73; and Carl Petry, “A Paradox of Patronage during the Later Mamluk Period,” *Muslim World* 73 (1983): 182–207.

46. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dibājah*, 36. It is noteworthy that Ibn al-Fāriḍ craved *harīṣah*, since this dish was believed to increase sexual potency, arousing the “animal soul”; see J. C. Bürgel, “Love, Lust, and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam as Reflected in Literary Sources,” in *Society and*

the Sexes, edited by Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot (Malibu: University of California Press, 1979), 90. It should be noted that, had Ibn al-Fāriḍ eaten the sweet, he would not have committed a sin, since this was a supererogatory fast.

47. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājāh*, 36–37. For ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī’s extensive biography, see *E11*, 4:506; and Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu‘jam*, 7:313.

48. See Boullata’s analysis of the story (“Biography,” 51–52). He believes that Ibn al-Fāriḍ had his own order. The *khirqah*’s use as a sign of favor parallels a similar use of the *ijāzah*, or “certification”; see Trimingham, *Orders*, 36–37, 192.

49. Al-Fayyūmī (*Nathr*, 2:69a–b), who relates his story from the noted scholar Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734/1334); see *E12*, 3:932–33; and Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu‘jam*, 11:269–70.

50. The name in the manuscript is “Sayf al-Dīn Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Wāsiṭī,” which does not correspond exactly to any person whom I have found living in Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s time.

51. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājāh*, 37–38. Traditionally, the “Night of Power” is said to commemorate the occasion of revelation of the entire Qur’ān to the Prophet Muhammad; see Rahman, *Major Themes*, 102–3; and the Qur’ān 44:4.

52. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājāh*, 38–39.

53. Ibid., 39–41. Al-Ja‘barī was a noted religious scholar, preacher, Sufi, and poet; he is reported to have performed miracles. See, al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:123–24; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Nabīh*, 1:116; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 1:523; al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Cairo: Maktabat Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṣabīḥ, 1965), 1:177; and Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 5:500.

54. This is v. 99 of the *al-Tā’rīyah al-kubrā*.

55. This quatrain accounts for two of six verses ascribed to the poet rhyming in “mim,” which Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s grandson ‘Alī incorporated into a poem of his own (Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, 239–40). Al-Ja‘barī and ‘Alī clearly regarded these verses as indicative of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s saintly status, as his attempt to live righteously in this confusing world led at death to a vision of the promised paradise. Such a reading of this quatrain is in marked contrast to Ibn Taymīyah’s polemical interpretation, in which the “desire” and “jumbled dream” refer to the false beliefs of the poet (see chap. 1 of the present study). It should be noted that the phrase *adghāth ahlām* (jumbled dreams, confused dreams, nightmares) also appears twice in the Qur’ān. In 21:5 the unbelievers denounce the Prophet’s words as “confused dreams,” and, perhaps, Ibn Taymīyah had this passage in mind when criticizing the poet for unbelief. Yet in 22:44 Pharaoh’s advisors label as “confused dreams” his dream of seven lean cows devouring seven

fat ones. Significantly, in both passages the confusion is dispelled to reveal God's true message.

56. For more on Rābi'ah al-ʿAdawīyah (d. 185/801), the most famous female Sufi, see Margaret Smith, *Rābi'ah the Mystic* (1928; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

57. This is v. 50 of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-ṣuḡhrā*.

58. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 41.

59. Boullata, "Biography," 47.

60. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 41–42. Also see Homerin, "Shrine," 133–34; and Boullata, "Biography," 52.

61. Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dībājah*, 42.

Chapter Three: Controversy

1. Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, photocopy of MS 1219 (Tāʾriḫh), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 5:3:240; and *Fadd al-khiṭām ʿan al-tawrīyah wa-al-istikhdam*, edited by Muḥammadī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, al-Ḥanawī (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibāʿah al-Muḥammadiyah, 1979), 197–98. Also see S. A. Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions of the Tawrīya and Safadī's Fadd al-Xitām ʿan al-Tawrīya wa'l-Istixdam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 88–89. For al-Ṣafadī, see *EII*, 3:52–54.

2. Al-Fayyūmī, *Nathr*, 2:68b–70b. Also see al-Nuwayrī's short biography of the poet, in his work *Nihāyat al-arab*, 27:50; and Ibn al-Wardī's (d. 750/1349) notice to the poet, in *Tāʾriḫh Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar Ibn al-Wardī* (Egypt: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Wahhābiyah, 1868), 2:161.

3. Al-Udfuwī, *al-Badr*, 42b–43a. Concerning al-Udfuwī, see Kahhālāh, *Muʿjam*, 3:136.

4. Al-Yāfiʿī, *Mirʾāt*, 4:75–79. A portion of this account was quoted by al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405) in his work *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, 1:657. For more on al-Yāfiʿī, see *EII*, 4:144–45. Also see Boullata, "Biography," 53.

5. Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ*, edited by Nūr al-Dīn Shuraybah (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Tāʾlif, 1973), 464–65. Concerning Ibn al-Mulaqqin, see Kahhālāh, *Muʿjam*, 7:297–98.

6. Ibn Duqmāq, *Nuzhat al-anām fī tāʾriḫh al-aṣnām*, photocopy of MS 1740 (Tāʾriḫh), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 11a–17b. For more on this historian, see *EII*, 3:756.

7. See Ibn al-Faqih ʿUthmān (fl. 779/1378), *Murshid al-zuwwār*, MS 5129 (Tāʾriḫh), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 204b–205a; and Ibn al-Nāsikh, *Miṣbah al-dayājī*, MS 1461 (Tāʾriḫh), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 135b.

8. Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyārah*, edited by Qāsim Muḥammad al-Rajab (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1967), 296–300. In his ac-

count of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Ibn al-Zayyāt quoted extensively from the *Dībājah* (see Homerin, “Shrine,” 134). Concerning Ibn al-Zayyāt, see Kahḥālāh, *Muʿjam*, 11:238. For more on Ibn Zayyāt and pilgrimage guides to the Qarāfah, see the descriptive study by Christopher S. Taylor, “The Cult of the Saints in Late Medieval Egypt” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1989).

9. Al-Dhahabī, *Siyyar al-ʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, microfilm 962 (Taʾrīkh), Cairo: Arab League Manuscript Institute, of MS 2910, Istanbul: Maktabat Aḥmad al-Thālith, 13:422. Also see al-Dhahabī’s *al-ʿIbar fī khabar man ghabar*, edited by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munjid (Kuwait: Maṭbaʿat Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 1966), 5:129. For more on al-Dhahabī, see *EI2*, 2:214–16. As noted earlier, the term *waqt* (moment, time) may also refer to a moment of mystical experience or intuition.

10. Al-Dhahabī, *Mixān al-ʾitidāl fī naqd al-rijāl* (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963), 3:214–15. For more Islamic opinions on poetry, see Th. Emil Homerin, “Preaching Poetry: The Forgotten Verse of Ibn al-Ṣahrazūrī,” *Arabica* 38 (1991): 87–101.

11. Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, 17:59b–60a. Al-Dhahabī also quoted thirty-two verses from the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, which he believed contained undeniable references to monistic doctrines. The verses include 151–53, 213, 275–76, 538, 674–76, 732–42. Also see al-Dhahabī’s student Ibn Kathīr (*al-Bidāyah*, 13:143), for another censure of the poet.

12. Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, *al-Ghayth*, 1.

13. Ibid. Ibn Abī Ḥajalah concluded his *al-Ghayth* with nearly a hundred pages in refutation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the monists. Also see Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 4:319; *al-Durar*, 1:329–31; and *EI2*, 3:386. For more on al-Sirāj al-Hindī, who also wrote a commentary favorable to the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*, see *EI1*, 4:361. Another scholar, Ibn Khatīb (d. 776/1375), also refuted Ibn Abī Ḥajalah; see Massignon, *Passion*, 3:314–15.

14. Quoted by al-Biqāʿī in his work *Tanbīh al-ghabī ʿalā takfīr Ibn ʿArabī*, microfilm of MS 2040, Leiden: Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, 35b–35a; and later by al-Maqbalī, in *al-ʿAlam al-shāmikh* (Cairo: n.p., 1910), 500. Also see Ḥilmī, *al-Ḥubb*, 120–21. For Ibn Khaldūn’s other critiques of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, see his work *al-Muqaddimah* (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Adabiyah, 1900), 471, 473 (Rosenthal trans., *The Muqaddimah*, 1:87, 92); and *Shifāʾ al-sāʾil*, edited by Ignace-Abdo Khalife (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1959), 51. For more on Ibn Khaldūn, see *EI2*, 3:825–31.

15. Ibn al-Ahdal, *Kashf al-ghitāʾ*, 199–201. Ibn al-Ahdal cited a number of verses from the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* to prove Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s infidelity. They were: 263, 460, 152–53, 740–41, 264, 528, 333, 313, 760–61, in that order. Ibn al-Ahdal was a theologian, *ḥadīth* scholar, and historian; see Kahḥālāh, *Muʿjam*, 4:15–16.

16. Al-Udfuwī, *al-Badr*, 43a.

17. Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 4:317–19. Ibn Ḥajar began each biography in this work by quoting, in full, al-Dhahabī's account of the individual in *al-Mizān*. Thus, Boullata ("Biography," 53–54) has mistakenly ascribed some of al-Dhahabī's remarks on Ibn al-Fāriḍ to Ibn Ḥajar. Nevertheless, the positions of both men regarding the poet are essentially the same, and Ibn Ḥajar quoted roughly half of the verses cited by al-Dhahabī from the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* as proof of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's monistic heresy. In addition, Ibn Ḥajar also related the story of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the dancers of al-Bahnasā in order to question the poet's character. In his version of the story, taken out of context from al-Qūṣī, Ibn Ḥajar did not mention that the dancers were the poet's slaves, which made legal his interactions with them (see chap. 1 of the present study). For more on Ibn Ḥajar, see *EI2*, 3:776–79; for more on al-Bulqīnī, see *EI2*, 3:1308–9; and Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 232–40, who profiles several generations of this renowned scholarly family.

18. See al-Biqāʿī, *Ṣawāb al-jawāb*, microfilm of MS 2040, Leiden: Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, 62a; Kātib Čelebī, *Kashf*, 1:267; and Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (Cairo: Maktabat ʿAmmān, 1986), 7:7, 56. Also see al-Biqāʿī, *al-Radd*, 150a, 164a–68b. Al-Bisāṭī's reference to an epileptic woman parodies vv. 219–25 of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā*. For more on al-Bisāṭī, who was a student of Ibn Khaldūn, see Kaḥḥālah, *Muʿjam*, 8:291–92.

19. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 9:291–92; and al-Biqāʿī, *Ṣawāb*, 49a. For more on Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, see Kaḥḥālah, *Muʿjam*, 11:294–95.

20. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 8:129; and al-Suyūṭī, *Qamʿ al-muʿāriḍ fī nuṣrat Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, edited by ʿAbd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Khāliq (Cairo: n.p., 1987), 84. Muḥammad Ibn al-Humām had previously studied with al-Bisāṭī; see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 8:127–32; and Kaḥḥālah, *Muʿjam*, 10:264–66.

21. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 9:292.

22. For an insightful analysis of the *waqf*, or "endowment" institution, vis-à-vis the Mamluk elite, see Petry, "Patronage," 189–95. For an overview of religious belief and practice during Mamluk times, see Annemarie Schimmel, "Some Glimpses of Religious Life during the Later Mamluk Period," *Islamic Studies* 4 (1965): 353–92; and "Sufismus und Heiligenverehrung im spätmittelalterlichen Ägypten," in *Festschrift für W. Caskel*, edited by Erich Gräf (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 274–89; and Donald P. Little, "Religion under the Mamluks," *Muslim World* 73 (1983): 165–81. Concerning the multiple and often contradictory relations between the religious elite—including Sufis—and their Mamluk rulers, see Petry, *Civilian Elite*, esp. 267–72, 312–25; and Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim*

Cities in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), esp. chaps. 3 and 6. For Sufi-ruler relations in an Indian context, see the detailed and insightful study by Carl Ernst, *Eternal Garden* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), esp. 38–61, 191–247.

23. See Homerin, “Shrine,” 134–35, for details of the endowment.

24. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, translated by W. Popper as *History of Egypt, 1382–1469 A.D.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 23:5, 46, 54–55, 60, 146, 153–55; and *Ḥawādith al-duhūr*, edited by W. Popper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942), 77, 453, 456, 671, 681, 683. Also see *EI2*, 4:462–63.

25. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm* (trans. Popper as *History of Egypt*, 23:153–55); and Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾir*^c, 3:80, who noted that Barqūq was like a brother to Qāʾit Bāy. Concerning *khushdash*, see D. Ayalon, “L’Éclavage due Mamelouk,” *The Mamluk Military System* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), I:29–31, 34–37; and “Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army—I,” *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), I:206–13.

26. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Ḥawādith*, 710–13; al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbāʾ*³, 71–76; and Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾir*^c, 3:32–36. For more on Qāʾit Bāy’s periodic confiscations (*muṣādarah*), see *EI2*, 4:463. Barqūq was named *kāshif al-turāb*, or “Inspector of the Dikes,” which allowed him to inspect a district and to collect money and men to repair the dikes; he was also appointed *kāshif al-dam*, or “Inspector of Blood,” and so investigated cases of manslaughter and homicide.

27. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbāʾ*³, 129, 136–37, 141–43. Such confiscations and pay cuts became common during Qāʾit Bāy’s reign; see *EI2*, 4:463.

28. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbāʾ*³, 118, 125; and Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾir*^c, 3:36, 80. That Barqūq oversaw *awqāf* of certain properties in the eastern delta province of al-Sharqīyah may have strengthened his resolve to restore order there. See Barqūq’s *waqf* deed cited in Homerin, “Shrine,” 135. Concerning the declining economic situation at this time, see Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 25–34.

29. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbāʾ*³, 151–53; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾir*^c, 3:44; Kātib Čelebī, *Kashf*, 1:266–67; and al-Biqāʿī, *al-Radd*, 100b–101a.

30. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Dawʾ*³, 9:95, 1:108. Also see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾir*^c, 3:44–45; and Kātib Čelebī, *Kashf*, 1:266–67. The full title of al-Biqāʿī’s polemic was *Ṣawāb al-jawāb lil-sāʾil al-murtāb al-muʿārid al-mujādil fī kufr Ibn al-Fāriḍ* (The Proper Answer to the Skeptical Questioner, the Disputing Opponent, Concerning the Infidelity of Ibn al-Fāriḍ).

31. Al-Biqāʿī, *Ṣawāb*, 39b–43b. Many of the thirty verses cited by al-

Biqā'ī had been quoted earlier by al-Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar in their refutations of the poet.

32. Ibid., 43a–50a. In this discussion and elsewhere al-Biqā'ī cited al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyā'*, especially the latter's remarks on *shath*, or "theophantic locutions."

33. Al-Biqā'ī, *Ṣawāb*, 43b–51a. Al-Biqā'ī was probably referring to the Ismā'īlī Qarmaṭī community in Yemen. See *EI2*, 4:660–65.

34. Al-Biqā'ī, *Ṣawāb*, 50b–51a.

35. Ibid., 51b–64a. Al-Biqā'ī quoted from the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* and commentaries on it by al-Farghānī, al-Bisāṭī, and others, to prove the poet's infidelity. In addition, he asserted that most of the commentaries were nonsense meant to beguile the naive and to conceal the fact that the heretical, literal meanings were what the poet had believed and intended.

36. Al-Biqā'ī, *Kitāb al-Nāṭiq bi-al-ṣawāb al-fāriḍ li-takfīr Ibn al-Fāriḍ* (The Book of the One Declaring the Incumbent Propriety for Declaring Ibn al-Fāriḍ an Infidel). In this work al-Biqā'ī cited over four hundred verses from the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā* along with portions of the major commentaries on them. Al-Biqā'ī added his comments in the margins, but his remarks usually consisted of a word or two, such as *ittiḥād* (unification/monism) or *ḥulūl* (incarnation). Also included in this polemic was a copy of the *Ṣawāb al-jawāb*.

37. M. al-Sakhāwī emphatically stated that al-Biqā'ī had been reckless and extreme in his legal opinions against Ibn al-Fāriḍ and those who read the *al-Tā'īyah al-kubrā*. Al-Sakhāwī also noted that opponents of al-Biqā'ī took two basic positions; either they verbally ridiculed him, or they wrote statements to the effect that it would have been better for him had he busied himself with opinions on ablutions or prayers, since his declaration of infidelity against certain Muslims might itself constitute infidelity. Among those rebuking al-Biqā'ī was the very important senior religious official, the shaykh al-Islām Amīn al-Dīn al-Āqṣarā'ī (797–880/1395–1475), who, at one of his study sessions, severely criticized al-Biqā'ī and drove him away after al-Biqā'ī issued his refutation of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. See M. al-Sakhāwī, *Wajīz al-kalām fī dhayl 'alā Duwal al-Islām*, microfilm of MS 1189, Istanbul: Köprülü Library, Chicago: Uncataloged Microfilm Collection, University of Chicago, 41b–42a. For al-Āqṣarā'ī, see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw'*, 10:240–43.

38. See Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ir*, 3:44–45; and Kātib Čelebī, *Kashf*, 1:267.

39. The text of Ibn al-Ghars's refutation is contained in the Leiden MS 2040 of al-Biqā'ī's *Ṣawāb*, 64a–124b. Ibn Ghars went so far as to teach his refutation to students; see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw'*, 9:220–21; and Kaḥḥālah, *Mu'jam*, 11:277.

40. Al-Suyūṭī, *Qam'*, 47–102. For more on al-Suyūṭī, see E. M. Sertain,

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), esp. 1:33–37, 54–55; and *EII*, 3:573–75.

41. Al-Biqāʿī, *al-Radd al-kāshif li-murād ahl al-ittiḥād* (The Refutation Exposing the Folk of Unification), also contained in Leiden MS 2040, 64a–124b; see esp. 64b–65a, 113b, 136b. Al-Biqāʿī also denounced Ibn al-Fāriḍ several times in a refutation of Ibn al-ʿArabī. There al-Biqāʿī conjectured that Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s dream of the Prophet Muhammad and the latter’s naming of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* may have been the result of the poet’s use of hashish. See al-Biqāʿī, *Tanbīh al-ghabī*, 35b; and Ḥilmī, *al-Ḥubb*, 123.

42. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 1:85–86. Also see al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Kubrā*, 2:77–80; and Winter, *Society and Religion*, 95–96. For more on the popular Aḥmadīyah Sufi order, see *EI2*, 1:280–81.

43. Al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Kubrā*, 2:79.

44. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾir*, 3:45; and M. al-Sakhāwī, *Wajīz*, 41b, who felt that these invectives went too far. For more on al-Manṣūrī, see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 2:150–51; al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm al-ʿiqyān fī aʿyān al-aʿyān*, edited by Philip K. Hitti (New York: Maṭbaʿat al-Sūriyah al-Amrikīyah, 1927), 77–90; and Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:346.

45. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾir*, 3:45.

46. *Ibid.*, 3:46. Ibn al-Qānṣūh min Ṣādiq was primarily a court poet of the late fifteenth–early sixteenth centuries; see Kaḥḥālāh, *Muʿjam*, 11:148–49.

47. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾir*, 3:46.

48. Hence, al-Biqāʿī’s telling assertion (*Ṣawāb*, 47b): “If the ‘ulamā’ are not God’s saints, then God has no saint!”

49. See Schimmel’s brief analysis of these events in “Sufismus,” 287–89; and “Glimpses,” 380–81; and that of Winter, *Society*, 162–65. It should be noted that all of the poet’s major antagonists were affiliated with Sufism. Al-Matbulī and al-Kinānī were known Sufis, while Ibn Imām al-Kāmilīyah had instructed al-Suyūṭī in the Sufi exercise of *dhikr* (Sartain, *al-Suyūṭī*, 1:35). Ibn al-Shiḥnah held a post as a Sufi, in which his son ʿAbd al-Barr acted as a substitute. Al-Biqāʿī, too, appreciated certain Sufis and their teachings and al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1073), in particular, whom he cited in the *Ṣawāb*, 51b–52a. Although these and like-minded Muslims rejected more speculative types of mysticism associated with monistic doctrines, this hardly made them “anti-Sufi.” For more on this persistent misperception, see Homerin, “Ibn Taymīya.” By contrast, most of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s supporters were fond of Ibn al-ʿArabī and his theosophy.

50. Ibn al-Shiḥnah was sixty-eight, al-Kinānī seventy-one, Ibn Imām al-Kāmilīyah sixty-three, and al-Biqāʿī sixty. I could not find al-Matbulī’s birthdate. Most of their students may have been even younger than their

early twenties and so not mentioned by name. Ibn Iyās referred to them collectively as “a large group of students of jurisprudence [*‘ilm*]” (Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i*⁵, 3:44).

51. Al-Bakrī was sixty-five, Ibn Quṭlūbughā seventy, al-Kāfiyājī eighty-three, al-Manṣūrī eighty-two. As an accomplished poet, al-Manṣūrī could be expected to side with Ibn al-Fāriḍ, while Ibn Quṭlūbughā had other reasons.

52. The age differences suggest that generational conflict was a factor in this dispute, as members of successive generations confronted one another over positions of power and, just as important, on issues of interpreting their religious heritage and worldview. See Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 276–320. Mannheim’s work was brought to my attention by Dale Eickelman, who applied several of Mannheim’s observations in his own work on Morocco; see Dale F. Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 215–18.

53. Sartain, *al-Suyūṭī*, 1:37, 44–45, 72, 81, 84.

54. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’*, 6:259–61; 5:110–11; 9:221, 248–52. Al-Sakhāwī noted that the Mālikī scholar and Sufi al-Wazīrī ingratiated himself with Ibn Muzhir, Qā’it Bāy’s personal secretary, and that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān was also a favorite of Ibn Muzhir, before whom he read an invective on al-Biqā’ī. Al-Sakhāwī added that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, a trained Shāfi’ī jurisprudent and *ḥadīth* scholar, became a vociferous defender of Ibn al-‘Arabī only after the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy—that is, only after the sultan’s favorable opinion on the matter was known. As for al-Jawharī, al-Sakhāwī exclaimed that for such a profligate to refute al-Biqā’ī was almost unthinkable.

55. Ibid., 6:184–90; and Kaḥḥālah, *Mu’jam*, 8:111–12.

56. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’*, 4:33–34, 9:295–305; and al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbā’*, 189–90, 267–68. Among the positions filled by ‘Abd al-Barr was that of a Sufi and teacher at the Shaykhūniyah *madrasah*. For more on Ibn al-Shiḥnah, see al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm*, 171–72; *El2*, 3:938; and Schimmel, “Kalif,” 93–101. For more on his son, also see Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 7:321–22.

57. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’*, 9:251, 1:101–11; and *Wajīz*, 41b–42a. Also, for more on al-Biqā’ī, see al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm*, 24–25; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 7:339–40; and Kaḥḥālah, *Mu’jam*, 1:71. For more on Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī (830–902/1427–97), see Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 7–13, 318–19.

58. See Kātib Čelebī, *Kashf*, 2:1174–75; and al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbā’*, 508–9, who noted that Ibn Hajar had greatly praised al-Biqā’ī and

had worked for his advancement. Concerning al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, also known as ‘Alī al-Ṣayrafī, see Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu‘jam*, 7:89–90.

59. M. al-Sakhāwī certainly thought this to be the case (*Wajīz*, 41b–42a). Al-Sakhāwī assumed a middle ground in the dispute; he did not appreciate allusions to monism in the poet’s verse, though he could not accept al-Biqā’ī’s charge of infidelity against Ibn al-Fāriḍ, who had died a Muslim. On the other hand, al-Sakhāwī would not approve accounts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ by the poet’s grandson ‘Alī, since they lacked a reliable corroborator. See *Wajīz*, 41b.

60. Failure to support one’s *khushdash* was considered a gross offense among the Mamluks; see Ayalon, “L’Ésclavage,” 30. Qā’it Bāy also had been infuriated a year earlier by the suggestion from a senior religious official that money for the empire should be raised by taking it from the sultan’s amirs, women, and troops, and not from religious endowments, scholars, or other civilians; see Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ir*, 3:14–15.

61. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ir*, 3:46–47. Concerning this important historian, see *EI*2, 3:812–13.

62. Probably Barqūq.

63. V. 284 of the *al-Tā’rīyah al-kubrā*. Earlier ‘Alī Sibṭ Ibn al-Fāriḍ had quoted this verse to Ibn Bint al-‘azz in Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s defense (*Dībājāh*, 31).

64. Perhaps Zakariyā was referring here to al-Ghazzālī or al-Qushayrī, on whose *al-Risālah* he wrote his commentary *Natā’ij al-afkār* (Būlāq: n.p., 1873).

65. These verses refer to the search for the new crescent moon that marks the beginning and end of the holy fasting month of Ramaḍān.

66. Ibn Muzhir had also been a student of the pro-Ibn al-Fāriḍ scholar al-Kāfiyājī; see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw‘*, 11:88–89; and al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm*, 97.

67. Al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣuḡhrā*, edited by ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 1970), 37–42; and Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ir*, 3:44. Zakariyā later became Qā’it Bāy’s chief Shāfi‘ī judge in 886/1481; see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw‘*, 3:234–38, who noted that he had personally criticized Zakariyā a number of times regarding the latter’s position in favor of Ibn al-‘Arabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ but that Zakariyā had stood firm. For more on Zakariyā, see al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbā’*, 407, 448; al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm*, 113; al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Kubrā*, 2:111–13, who considered Zakariyā to have been a saint; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā’irah bi a’yān al-mi‘ah al-‘āshirah*, edited by Jibrā’īl Sulaymān Jabbūr (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Amrīkāniyah, 1945), 1:196–207; and Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 8:134–36.

68. Al-Ghazzī, *al-Mi‘ah al-‘āshirah*, 1:203. Ibn al-Shammā‘ was primarily a *ḥadīth* scholar. Al-Ghazzī also noted that Zakariyā was heard to say

that Ibn al-Fāriḍ was a greater saint than Ibn al-‘Arabī (*al-Mi‘ah al-‘āshirah*, 1:204–5, 252; 2:224–26).

69. Al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṣughrā*, 38. Concerning al-Sha‘rānī, see Winter, *Society*.

70. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbā’*, 186; also see al-Sakhāwī *Wajīz*, 41b; and al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṣughrā*, 38.

71. Al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Ṣughrā*, 64. Also see M. Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 1:108, who gave a statement by al-Biqā‘ī to the same effect.

72. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 1:108.

73. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbā’*, 190. ‘Alī ibn Khāṣṣ Bāy was the father of Fāṭimah, the only wife of Qā’it Bāy to live with him at the Citadel; see Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ir*^c, 3:12; and Ibn Ṭaghri Birdī, *Ḥawādith*, 630. Also see al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbā’*, 66, 124, 128, 238, 360, 459.

74. M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 9:93–95; Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ir*^c, 3:48; and al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm*, 163. Ibn Imām al-Kāmiliyah had written an epistle against Ibn al-‘Arabī.

75. For Ṭāqī al-Dīn al-Ḥiṣnī, a noted Shāfi‘ī jurist, see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 11:76–77; al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm*, 97; and Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 7:331. One of al-Ḥiṣnī’s students, Muhammad ibn Jum‘ah al-Ḥaṣkafī al-Shaybānī (b. 842/1438), wrote a refutation of al-Biqā‘ī, the *Diryāq al-afā‘i*; see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 7:213–14; and Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ir*^c, 3:45.

76. Al-Kinānī, who was a Sufi as well as a legal scholar, also composed poetry, including verse inspired by one of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verses. In addition to his broad learning, al-Kinānī was known for his pious acts, such as financing the construction of mosques, fountains, and other structures for the public’s benefit; see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 1:205–7; and Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 2:321–22.

77. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbā’*, 189–90, 220, 251. ‘Abd al-Barr had been accused of being a Shī‘ī earlier that year, but he was cleared of the charge (194).

78. Ibid., 251. Al-Kāfiyājī was later rewarded by Qā’it Bāy for his services (318, 352–57, 407, 441). For more on al-Kāfiyājī, see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 2:259–61; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 1:549–50; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 7:326–27; and Kaḥḥālāh, *Mu‘jam*, 10:51–52.

79. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbā’*, 267–68; M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 9:300–301; and Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ir*^c, 3:47–48. Also see Schimmel, “Kalif,” 98–100. Although Ibn al-Shiḥnah’s critical faculties and memory had been impaired due to illness, he was allowed to retain some of his posts until his death in 890/1485.

80. Literally: “Either I’m in Egypt or you are!” (Al-Sha‘rānī, *al-Kubrā*, 2:80). Al-Sha‘rānī further noted that al-Matbulī’s deportment during this

last meeting with the sultan was not befitting a Sufi. Also see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3:88; and Schimmel, “Sufimus,” 288–89.

81. Al-Biqāʿī probably lodged his complaint with the ḥājib al-ḥujjāb because some amirs were involved in the controversy; the ḥājib al-ḥujjāb administered justice among the Mamluks. Yet, as a manumitted slave of Jaqmaq, Timur min Maḥmūd Shāh no doubt was considerate of the interests of his *khushdash*, Qāʾit Bāy and Barqūq. See M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 3:42; D. Ayalon, “Studies in the Structure of the Mamluk Army—III,” *Studies*, I:60; and Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 407–8.

82. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbāʾ*, 257. Ibn Iyās mentioned that in 878/1473 al-Biqāʿī was charged with infidelity and sentenced to death by a Mālikī judge. Some amirs—perhaps remembering the Ibn al-Fāriḍ controversy—were prepared to execute the order, but al-Biqāʿī took refuge with Ibn Muzhir, who protected him. Al-Biqāʿī then left Cairo for good (*Badāʾiʿ*, 3:80).

83. Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 6:18, 1:106–7. Concerning Nūr al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (b. 850/1446), see 6:18–19; and al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Ṣuḡhrā*, 63–64. Al-Maḥallī also composed a refutation of the *al-Tāʾīyah al-kubrā* and Ibn al-Ghars’s attack on al-Biqāʿī. Al-Biqāʿī added this refutation to his own, along with a copy of his *Ṣawāb*, and entitled the entire collection, *al-Jawāb al-ḥadd ilā taḥqīq al-murād min tablīs ahl al-ittiḥād* (The Devastating Response to the Realization of the Deceitful Purpose of the Folk of Unification), perhaps completed in 879/1474. Al-Biqāʿī’s *al-Nāṭiq* may have been composed around this time too, suggesting that al-Biqāʿī maintained his opposition to Ibn al-Fāriḍ, perhaps to save face after being reprimanded by the sultan and disgraced by his colleagues. See Leiden MS 2040, 39a–190b, dated 879/1474; and the Bodleian MS Arabici, 1:68–69 (Marsh. 642), 48b–292b, dated 876/1471.

84. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbāʾ*, 206–7; M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ*, 3:12; and his *Wajīz*, 56a; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3:80; and ʿAlī al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, edited by Maḥmūd Rabīʿ and Ḥasan Qāsim (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿUlūm wa-al-Ādāb, 1937), 383. Although none of these sources mentioned the son’s name, M. al-Sakhāwī gave the biography of one of Barqūq’s sons, ʿAlī Bāy, whom he described as intelligent and charitable. ʿAlī Bāy and a brother died of the plague in 897/1491 (*al-Ḍawʿ*, 5:150).

85. Al-Khaṭīb al-Jawharī, *Inbāʾ*, 257; and Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3:47–48, 85, 97, 169. Also see Ibn Taḡhrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, 6:288–90; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn*, 1:518; and A. al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat*, 380–83. Also see the accounts of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s life included in Persian collections of Muslim saints, such as Ḥusayn Ṭabasī Gāzurgāhī’s (d. pre-930/1524) *Majlis al-ʿushshāq*, MS 2 (Ṭasawwuf Fārisī Talʿat), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 85–86, incorrectly ascribed to Ibn Bayqarā, a common mistake (pers. com. from John

E. Woods); and see Jāmī's (d. 898/1492) very popular *Nafahāt al-uns*, edited by Mahdī Tawhīdīpūr (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī Sa'dī, 1958), 539–45, who quoted extensively from the *Dībājah* and al-Yāfi'ī.

Chapter 4: Disjunction

1. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ī'*, 5:258–59. After Selim I conquered Damascus he had a mosque built around Ibn al-ʿArabī's grave; see *EII*, 4:214–17; and al-Ghazzī, *al-Mīʾah al-ʿāshirah*, 2:28.

2. Tāshköprüzāde, *Miftāḥ al-saʿādah* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1968), 1:232, 247–48. For Tāshköprüzāde, see *EII*, 4:689–90. A later author, the noted Andalusian historian al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1632), stated:

The shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī sent to the master ʿUmar, asking his permission to comment on the *al-Tāʾrīyah*. But [Ibn al-Fāriḍ] said, “Your book entitled *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* is a commentary of it.” (*Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, edited by Iḥsān ʿAbbās [Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968], 2:166)

The later Ottoman writer Evliyā Çelebī also gave a version of this story in his *Seyāḥetnāmesī* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbassı, 1938), 10:573.

3. Al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durrīyah*, MS 1885 (Taʾrīkh Ṭalʿat), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 559, 561–67. Al-Munāwī based the bulk of this hagiography on ʿAlī's *Dībājah*, but he also quoted from al-Udfuwī, Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, Ibn Taymīyah, al-Dhahabī, and others. For al-Munāwī, see Kaḥḥālāh, *Muʿjam*, 5:220–21. For Ibn al-ʿImād's abridged version, see *Shadharāt*, 5:149–53; also see *EI2*, 3:807. A famous contemporary of Ibn al-ʿImād, the Mughal prince and Sufi Dārā Shukūh (d. 1068/1659), also included a short biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his work *Safīnat al-awliyāʾ*, Chicago: University of Chicago microfilm 1296 of the Persian MS 886, London: India Office Library, 113b.

4. Al-Maqbalī, *al-ʿAlam al-shāmikh*, 467–68, 499–500; also see Kaḥḥālāh, *Muʿjam*, 5:14.

5. Al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durrīyah*, 577; also see al-Ghazzī, *al-Mīʾah al-ʿāshirah*, 2:28–29; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 8:303–4; al-Bakrī al-Sid-dīqī, *al-Kawākib al-sāʾirah fī akhbār Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, Chicago: University of Chicago Microfilm Collection microfilm of MS 1852 (Taymūr), Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 21b.

6. Al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Yawāqīt*, 1:11. Al-Munāwī also gave a version of this story, which he claimed involved a literalist's grammatical commentary written during the *time* of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (*al-Kawākib al-durrīyah*, 564). Perhaps this story refers back to al-Bisāṭī's commentary. For Shaykh

Madyan, see M. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Dawʿ*, 10:150–52; al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Kubrā*, 2:92–94; and Winter, *Society*, 94–95.

7. Al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durrīyah*, 566; and al-Ghazzī, *al-Mīʾah al-ʿāshirah*, 1:177–78; also see 1:70, 2:57, and other stories cited by al-Munāwī.

8. On this important issue of miracles and their relation to class see J.-C. Garcin, “Historie et hagiographie de l’Égypte musulmane à la fin de l’époque mamelouke et au début de l’époque ottomane,” *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron, 1927–1976* (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1979), 2:287–316; also see D. Weinstein and R. M. Bell, *Saints and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 205–9. For examples of the many recantations involving Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his verse, see Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (d. 974/1566), *al-Fatāwā al-ḥadīthīyah* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1970), 296–97; al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Sughrā*, 70; *al-Kubrā*, 1:11; and *al-Yawāqūt wa-al-jawāhir* (Egypt: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Maymanīyah, 1889), 1:10–11. Also see al-Munawī’s hagiography of the poet, Ibn al-ʿImād’s abridgment; al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ*, 5:260–61, 271; and Sayyid Nūr Allāh Shushtarī (d. 1019/1610), *Majālis al-muʾminīn* (Tehran: Lithograph ed., 1881), 278–79.

9. In addition to Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s immense literary influence on later Arabic poetry, traces of his verse can also be found among the work of several great Persian poets, such as al-ʿIrāqī’s (d. 688/1289) *Lamaʿāt*, translated by W. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson as *Divine Flashes* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 70, 100, 103; Rūmī’s (d. 672/1273) *Mathnavī* (see the index to R. A. Nicholson’s ed.); and Saʿdī’s *ghazals*; see Ḥusayn ʿAlī Maḥfūz, *Mutanabbī va Saʿdī* (Tehran: Chapkhānah-i Ḥaydarī, 1957), 216.

10. Al-Nābulusī, *Kashf al-sirr al-ghāmiḍ fī sharḥ Dīwān Ibn al-Fāriḍ*, microfilm of MS 4114 (534), Princeton: Yahuda Section, Garrett Collection, Princeton University. A very useful grammatical commentary on much of the *Dīwān* was composed by al-Būrīnī (d. 1024/1619); see al-Daḥdah’s edition of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Dīwān*. For other commentaries, including those in Persian and Turkish, see Kātib Čelebī, *Kashf*, 1:265–67, 767; 2:1338, 1349; and my forthcoming study of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verse, *Passion before Me*.

11. Evliyā Čelebī, *Seyāḥetnāmesī*, 10:573; this and other citations from Evliyā Čelebī were kindly translated for me by Robert Dankoff. For more on Evliyā Čelebī, see *EI2*, 2:717–20.

12. Evliyā Čelebī, *Seyāḥetnāmesī*, 10:238.

13. *Ibid.*, 10:469–70, 238, 573. Also see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 43, 82–83, 98–100,

regarding similar crossings of social boundaries in the presence of the saints at Christian shrines.

14. Al-Nābulusī, *al-Ḥaḳīqah wa-al-majāz*, 195–98. For more on this polymath, see *EI*2, 1:60.

15. Al-Nābulusī, *al-Ḥaḳīqah wa-al-majāz*, 279–80.

16. *Al-Kahf* is the eighteenth chapter of the Qurʾān. Recitation of all or a part of it is believed by Muslims to aid the reader on the Judgment Day and to provide spiritual illumination. See ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Fa-dhkurūnī adhkurkum* (Cairo: Shaʿb, 1970), 81–83.

17. The opening chapter of the Qurʾān, which is recited in all five required daily prayers.

18. Qurʾān 5:35.

19. This is v. 1, which al-Nābulusī understood as referring to the death of self-will and selfishness, which had been overcome by divine love (*Kashf al-sirr al-ghāmiḍ*, 348b–49a).

20. This is the second hemistich of v. 26. Some in the audience probably understood “his fine qualities” as referring to the Prophet Muhammad, but al-Nābulusī believed this phrase to refer to God’s divine attributes (*Kashf al-sirr al-ghāmiḍ*, 358a).

21. Brown’s insightful comments regarding the replication of social relations in the cult of Christian saints are also pertinent to Islam:

The role of replication in late antiquity . . . enabled the Christian communities, by projecting a structure of clearly defined relationships onto the unseen world, to ask questions about the quality of relationships in their own society. . . . [It enabled] late-antique men to articulate and render manageable urgent, muffled debates on the nature and power of their own world, and to examine in the searching light of ideal relationships with ideal figures, the relation between power, mercy, and justice as practiced around them. (*Cult*, 63)

As we saw in the Mamluk controversies, an attack on the saints could imply opposition to the traditional power hierarchies (also see n. 22). For a study of the contemporary Muslim cult of the saints in northern Egypt and its possible legitimization of patron-client relations, see Edward B. Reeves, *The Hidden Government* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), esp. 155–95.

22. Al-Nābulusī, an Arab, specifically mentioned that those critical of the service at Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s shrine were Turkish. In 1711, about twenty years after al-Nābulusī’s visit to Cairo, a group of disgruntled Turkish students there attempted, unsuccessfully, to radically restrict beliefs and

practices regarding the saints and so to realign social and political forces in a pattern more beneficial to themselves. Naturally, the major religious authorities opposed them and publicly declared their continued belief in the saints. See the insightful analysis of this event by Rudolph Peters, "The Battered Dervishes of Bab Zuwayla: A Religious Riot in Eighteenth-Century Cairo," in *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*, edited by Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 93–115.

23. Clearly, for Mamluk and Ottoman Egypt, and, I suspect, for other pre-modern Islamic societies as well, Brown is mistaken when he claims that, "the holy tomb . . . existed always a little to one side of Muslim orthodoxy [*sic*]" (*Cult*, 9–10). In his book *Cult of the Saints* Brown has argued persuasively that the two-tiered model of religion, which features a correct, refined elite faith in opposition to the masses' vulgar superstitions, is a recent misreading of premodern religious history. Unfortunately, as Brown's own work illustrates, this two-tiered model continues to be invoked when dealing with Islam, which, in contrast to many forms of Christianity, has never had an articulated, institutionally enforced "orthodoxy."

24. Concerning Egypt under Ottoman rule, see P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent: 1516–1922* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966), 23–101, 167–230; and "The Pattern of Egyptian Political History from 1517 to 1798," in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, edited by P. M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 79–90; Daniel Crecelius, *The Roots of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1981); and "Non-ideological Responses of the Egyptian Ulama to Modernization," in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis*, edited by Nikki Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 167–209; and Peter Gran, *The Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

25. 'Alī Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqīyah al-jadīdah* (Būlāq: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kubrā al-Amīriyah, 1887), 5:59; and Ḥilmī, *al-Ḥubb*, 55. Concerning this 'Alī Bāy al-Ghazzāwī, see Crecelius, *Roots*, 37–38; and John Livingstone, "The Rise of the Shaykh al-Balad 'Alī Bey al-Kabīr: A Study in the Accuracy of the Chronicle of al-Jabartī," *Bulletin for the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33 (1970): 283–94. There were two important 'Alī Bāys at this time; the patron of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's shrine was the elder of the two, since he was amir al-Ḥajj in 1173/1760.

26. See Gran, *Islamic Roots*, 13; and Homerin, "Shrine," 136.

27. For example, the imitations (*takhmīs*) by Muṣṭafā al-Khalīlī (fl. 1243/1830), 'Abd al-Bāqī Effendī (d. 1278/1861), and Muḥammad Farghālī (d. 1316/1897); also see al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-athār* (Būlāq: n.p.,

1800), 2:25–27; al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-aṭhar fī aʿyān al-qarn al-hādī ʿashar* (Beirut: Maktab Khayyāt, 1966), 2:129–30, 464–65; and Shushtarī, *Majālis*, 278–80. For more on the intellectual life in this period, see Gran, *Islamic Roots*; and Gamal El-Din El-Shayyal, “Some Aspects of Intellectual and Social Life in Eighteenth-Century Egypt,” in Holt, *Political and Social Change*, 117–32.

28. Daḥdāh’s edition of the *Dīwān*, which does not include the *al-Tāʾfiyah al-kubrā*, was first published in Marseilles, but it was reprinted several times in Egypt between 1289–1310/1871–92. The new commentary was a modest grammatical one published by Amin Khūrī (d. 1334/1916), *Jalāl al-ghāmiḍ* (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Adabīyah, 1894). The four short biographies are by (1) ʿAlī Mubārak (d. 1311/1893), *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqiyyah*, 5:59–60; (2) Khayr al-Dīn Ibn al-Alūsī (d. 1317/1899), *Jalāl al-ʿaynayn* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madani, 1980), 95–98; and in Persian (3) Maʿšūm ʿAlī Shāh (d. 1268/1853), *Tarāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq* (Tehran: Kitāb-khānah-i Ṣanāʿī, 1960), 2:646–47; and (4) al-Khuwānsārī (d. 1313/1895), *Rawḍat al-jannāt* (Tehran: Maktabat-i Ismāʿīliyyān, 1970), 5:332–35.

29. ʿAlī Mubārak, *Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqiyyah*, 5:59; Gran, *Islamic Roots*, 31; Homerin, “Shrine,” 136–37; Crecelius, “Responses,” 180–83; and A. Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 66–70, 143.

30. See Marsot, *Egypt*; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1789–1939*, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 67–102; P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 49–123; and C. Ernest Dawn, “Arab Islam in the Modern Age,” *Middle East Journal* (1965): 435–36.

31. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 103–60, esp. 149–50; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1968), 237–60; and ʿAlī Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqiyyah*, 5:59.

32. See the reverential account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his shrine by the Westernizing reformer, statesman, educator, and typographer ʿAlī Mubārak (1239–1311/1823–93). While Mubārak praised the poet’s verse and piety, he carefully avoided the miraculous, particularly in stories involving Ibn al-Fāriḍ and the greengrocer (*al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqiyyah*, 5:59–60). For more on ʿAlī Mubārak, see *EI2*, 1:396. Also see E. W. Lane’s *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), 5th ed. (London: John Murray, 1871), 1:79–138, 281–347; F. De Jong, *Turuq and Turuq Linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978); and Levzion and Voll, *Eighteenth-Century Renewal*.

33. See Homerin, “Shrine,” 137.

34. Rolland Michell, *An Egyptian Calendar for the Coptic Year 1617*

(1900–1901) (London: Luzac, 1900), 63. The hostel, though in disrepair, still functioned; see n. 40.

35. *Al-Manār* 7, no. 15 (July 1904): 331–32, quoted and translated by Michael Gilsenan in *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 201. For more on Riḍā, see Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 222–44; and Malcolm Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

36. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 232, 161–90. Also see Rahman, *Islam*, 237–89; and *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1–83.

37. Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Manār wa-al-Azhar* (Cairo, 1934), 171–72, quoted and translated by Hourani in *Arabic Thought*, 225.

38. These opinions are clearly reflected in the critiques of saints and Sufis in literary works of the period, such as Tāhā Ḥusayn’s *al-Ayyām* (1901), M. Ḥusayn Haykal’s *Zaynab* (1914), and the poems of Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Ḥāfiẓ (d. 1932); see H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 36–37, 49; Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi*, 3; and C. C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 215–16.

39. See Martin Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), esp. 80, 89, 115, 141, 163–64, 181, 187–88. The French scholar Emile Dermenghem cited a letter from a Moroccan friend in Fez who wistfully recalled a *dhikr* ceremony in which a recitation of Ibn al-Fārid’s wine-ode was the high point. But the friend went on to complain that these ceremonies were no longer held due to a lack of interest on the part of the younger, more Westernized generation (Emile Dermenghem, *L’Éloge du vin* [Paris: Les Éditions Vêga, 1931], 64–67; also see *Le Culte des saints dans l’Islam maghrébin*, 6th ed. [Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1954]).

40. See J. W. McPherson, *The Moulids of Egypt* (Cairo: Ptd. N. M. Press, 1941), 274–75; H. Massignon, “La Cité des morts du Caire,” *Opera Minora*, 3:271; Ernest Bannerth, *Islamische Wallfahrtsstätten Kairos* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1973), 59; and F. De Jong’s insightful critique of Bannerth in the *Journal of Semitic Studies* 21 (1976): 231–37.

41. F. De Jong, personal communication.

42. See F. De Jong, “Aspects of Political Involvement of the Sufi Orders in Twentieth Century Egypt (1907–1970)—An Exploratory Stock-Taking,” in *Islam, Nationalism, and Radicalism in Egypt and the Sudan*, edited by G. R. Warburg, and U. M. Kupferschmidt (New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1983), 183–212; Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 231–32, 240–43, 246–49; and *Saint*

and *Sufi*, 45–46, 299; Morroe Berger, *Islam in Egypt Today* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 68–72; Denny, “God’s Friends,” 79–82; and Reeves, *Hidden Government*, 113–54.

43. The Egyptian Ministry of Awqāf for years refused to authorize the *mawlid*, claiming that the caretaker of the shrine was interested only in his own personal aggrandizement (F. De Jong, review of Bannerth, 235).

44. See Berger, *Islam in Egypt*, 76–78; Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi*, 144; *Recognizing Islam*, 229–30, 243–49; Th. Emil Homerin, “Ibn ‘Arabī in the People’s Assembly: Religion, Press, and Politics in Sadat’s Egypt,” *Middle East Journal* 40 (1986): 462–77.

45. M. Silvestre de Sacy, *Chrestomathie arabe* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1826), 3:122–66; Arabic text, 3:52–62; J. Grangeret de Lagrange, *Anthologie arabe* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1828), 117–21; Arabic text 44–91; and Joseph Von Hammer-Purgstall, *Das arabische Hohe Lied der Liebe* (Vienna: Kaiserl. Konigl. Hofund Staatsdruckerei, 1854). Of course, Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his poetry were known in the West prior to the nineteenth century. Fabricius (*Specimen arabicum* [Rostock, 1638], 151) cited four verses by the poet, whom he named Ibn Fāriḍ. These verses were reprinted with a Latin translation and notes in a 1666 manuscript by Pierre Dippy of Aleppo. The great orientalist and translator William Jones also published a Latin translation of an ode by Ibn al-Fāriḍ in his *Poeseos asiaticae commentarii* (Leipzig: Weidmanni et Reichum, 1777), 79ff. See Silvestre de Sacy, *Chrestomathie*, 3:131–32; and Dermenghem, *L’Éloge*, 98–103.

46. Von Hammer-Purgstall, *Das arabische*, vii–xxiv; and Ignazio Di Matteo, *Tā’rīyyatu ‘l-kubrā* (Rome, 1917); and “Sulla mia interpretazione del poema mistico d’Ibn al-Fāriḍ,” *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 8 (1919–20): 479–500.

47. See Carlo A. Nallino, “Il poema mistico arabo d’ Ibn al-Fāriḍ in una recente traduzione italiana,” *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 8 (1919–20): 1–106; and “Ancora su Ibn al-Fāriḍ e sulla mistica musulmana,” *ibid.*, 501–62; and R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 394–99; *Studies*, 199–266; “The Lives of ‘Umar Ibnu’l-Farid and Muhiyyu ‘DDin Ibnu’l-‘Arabi,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1906): 797–842; his article on Ibn al-Fāriḍ, in *EII*, 3:763–64; and *The Idea of Personality in Sufism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 28–32, 36–37.

48. Nicholson, *Studies*, viii; and *Personality*, 29–32.

49. Nicholson, *Studies*, 194; and *Personality*, 27–29.

50. For example, Amin al-Ḥasan, “Ibn al-Fāriḍ,” *al-‘Irfān* (1925): 369–71, 497–504, 718–22, 835–42; Zakī Mubārak, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī fī al-adab wa-al-akhḥlāq* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Risālah, 1938), 1:288–311; and

Aḥmad Fu'ād al-Ahwānī, “Tā’īyat ‘Amr ibn ‘Amr al-Baṣrī,” *al-Kitāb* (1949): 102–5, who quoted Massignon’s similar opinions on the poet. Several of Nicholson’s studies on Sufism, including *The Idea of Personality in Sūfism*, were translated into Arabic by his student, Abū al-‘Alā ‘Afīfī, and published in an anthology entitled *Fī al-taṣawwuf al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Lajnat al-Tā’lif wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1969).

51. Ḥilmī, *al-Ḥubb*, 194.

52. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Ibn al-Fāriq: sulṭān al-‘āshiqīn* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Miṣr, 1963); and *al-Ḥayāh al-rūḥīyah fī al-Islām* (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Tā’lif wa-al-Nashr, 1970), 151–54.

53. For this dominant interpretation in recent Western scholarship, see Arberry, *Mystical Poems* (1956), 10–11; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 274–79; *As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 41–45; and Martin Lings, “Mystical Poetry,” in *‘Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, edited by Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 235–64, esp. 253–60. For Ḥilmī’s influence on Arab studies, see Mīshāl Ghurayyib, *‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriq min khilāl shi‘rihi* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1965); ‘Aṭif Jawdah Naṣr, *Shi‘r ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriq: dirāsah fī fann al-shi‘r al-Ṣūfī* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1982); ‘Abd al-Khāliq Maḥmūd (‘Abd al-Khāliq), *Shi‘r Ibn al-Fāriq* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1984); and his articles in the popular magazine *al-Thaqāfah* 31, April 1976, 80–85; 36, September 1976, 33–37; Shawqī Ḍayf, *Fuṣūl fī al-shi‘r wa-naqdih*, 3d ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1988), 197–228; Abū al-Wafā al-Taftāzānī, *Madkhal ilā al-taṣawwuf al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1974), 260–72; and his article in the magazine *al-Hilāl* 81, no. 18 (July 1973): 130–39; A. S. Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-Ṣūfī fī Miṣr fī al-qarn al-sābi‘ al-Hijrī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1971); Muḥammad Ja‘far, *al-Taṣawwuf* (Alexandria: Dār al-Kutub al-Jāmi‘īyah, 1970), 224; Maḥmūd al-Munūfī, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī al-khālīṣ* (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1969), 187–90; Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd, *al-Sirr al-‘aṣam* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1970), 90–92. Also see ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafah al-Ṣūfīyah fī al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1967), 521–33. Although this Shaykh al-Azhar placed Ibn al-Fāriq in the theosophical school of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, Maḥmūd generally followed Ḥilmī’s analysis of the poet. The only recent negative treatment of Ibn al-Fāriq which I have encountered is an account by the very conservative ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl, *Hādhihi hiya al-Ṣūfīyah*, 3d ed. (Cairo: n.p., 1955), 24–33, whose gross misunderstanding and overly literal reading of Ibn al-Fāriq’s verse are truly remarkable.

54. See the insightful and finely illustrated study of contemporary *mawlid*s in Egypt by Nicolaas H. Biegan, *Egypt: Moulids, Saints, Sufis* (The Hague: Gary Swartz / SDU Publications, 1990). Also see Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi; Recognizing Islam*, 75–94, 215–50; Berger, *Islam in Egypt*,

62–63, 86; F. De Jong, “Cairene *Ziyāra* Days: A Contribution to the Study of Saint Veneration in Islam, *Die Welt des Islams* 17 (1976–77): 26–43; Denny, “Friends,” 79–82; and Reeves, *Hidden Government*, esp. 65–76, 113–95.

55. See Yūsuf al-Nabhānī’s (d. 1932) *Jam‘ karāmāt al-awliyā’* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1962), a collection of saint’s and their miracles, still popular today; and Maḥmūd al-Munūfī’s *Jamharat al-awliyā’* (Cairo: Mu‘assasat al-Ḥalabī, 1967), 2:245–48. While al-Nabhānī took many of his miracle stories directly from the *Dibājah* and al-Munāwī, al-Munūfī, writing in the 1960s, appears to have been concerned more with historical credibility, since he omits the incredible elements from his account of Ibn al-Fāriḍ: no birds appear at the funerals, and the talking lion is conspicuously absent. Nevertheless, al-Munūfī states that all those praying near the saint’s resplendent tomb will be answered by God.

56. *Al-Ahrām*, 21 June 1981, 14. Until this government recognition the al-Rifā‘īyah al-‘Amariyah’s hold on the shrine was tenuous. Another order, the al-Khalwatīyah al-Muḥammadiyah, headed by Muḥammad ‘Īd al-Shāfi‘ī, held monthly meetings at the mosque in the late 1960s, and by the early 1970s their study groups had become weekly Thursday events. When this latter group expressed an interest in raising money to renovate the mosque and shrine, the Rifā‘ī’s viewed this as an attempt to undermine their authority over the site (F. De Jong, pers. com.).

57. While the shaykh was alive, his certificate hung on the wall of the shrine near the head of the gravestone. I collected most of the information in this section from interviews made at the site in 1983–84, 1988–89, and, most recently, in 1993. I am especially indebted to Shaykh Gād, his wife Na‘imah (Umm ‘Umar), their oldest son, ‘Umar, and to the kind pilgrims. I am grateful also to Ursula Beyer, who introduced me to the shaykh and his family in 1983.

58. For the use of needles, swords, and other instruments in contemporary Egyptian *mawlid*s, see Biegman, *Egypt*, 160–62.

59. Usually, the festivities begin several days before the most important saint’s day. For comparable shrines and *mawlid*s, see Biegman, *Egypt*; and Reeves, *Hidden Government*, 77–96, 135–54. For more on the Sufi singers and their performances of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, see the fascinating account by Earle H. Waugh, *The Munshidin of Egypt: Their World and Their Song* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989). Tapes of several performances of Ibn al-Fāriḍ by Yā Sīn Tuhāmai are available in Cairo, from Tasjilat ‘Āidah Ramaḍān Rahīf, 41 Shāri‘ Ṭal‘at Ḥarb.

Epilogue

1. This is v.1 of a poem rhyming in “mīm” (*Dīwān*, 205).
2. Naguib Mahfouz, “Za‘balāwī,” *Dunyā Allāh* (1962) (Cairo: Dār Miṣr

lil-Ṭibāʿah, n.d.), 135–50, quotation from 143–44; my translation. Later Shaykh Gād sings again and again the beginning of v. 2 of the same ode. For a complete English translation of the story, see “Zaabalawi,” translated by Denys Johnson-Davies, in *Modern Islamic Literature*, edited by James K. Kritzeck (New York: New American Library, 1970), 243–54. For an insightful analysis of this story, see Sasson Somekh, “Zaʿbalāwī—Author, Theme, Technique,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 1 (1970): 24–35.

3. Naguib Mahfouz, *al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb* (1961) (Cairo: Dār Miṣr lil-Ṭibāʿah, n.d.); translated by Trevor Le Gassick et al. (Cairo: American University Press, 1984). For further analysis of this and other works by Mahfouz, see Sasson Somekh, *The Changing Rhythm* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973); and Mattityahu Peled, *Religion My Own: The Literary Works of Najīb Mahfūz* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1983), esp. 209–17, who refers to the presence of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verses in the story. Also see Menahem Milson, “Najīb Mahfūz and the Quest for Meaning,” *Arabica* 17 (1970): 177–86; and Mohamed Mahmoud, “The Unchanging Hero in a Changing World: Najīb Mahfūz’s *al-Liṣṣ wa ʿl-Kilāb*,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 15 (1984): 58–75.

4. Mahfouz, *al-Liṣṣ*, 175–76; my translation.

5. Vv. 15–16 of the *al-Hamziyah*; *Dīwān*, 174.

6. Ibid., v. 50.

7. Mahfouz, *al-Liṣṣ*, 176; my translation.

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Glossary

AYYUBIDS. The ruling dynasty of Egypt from 1171–1250, founded by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ibn Ayyūb, a Kurd known to the West as Saladin. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn conquered Egypt in 1169, which enabled him to gain control over Yemen, the holy lands, and Syria. Following his death in 1193, the Ayyubid empire was divided among his brothers and sons, though Egypt was the prized possession. Among the most notable later Ayyubids was Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's nephew, al-Malik al-Kāmil (r. 1218–38), who thwarted the Crusaders' attempt to take Egypt in 1221, and al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ (r. 1240–50), who defeated and captured the French king Louis IX, driving the last Crusaders from Egypt. After al-Ṣāliḥ's death a number of his MAMLUKS seized power in their own name, thus ending the Ayyubid dynasty.

AL-AZHAR. The premier institution of higher religious learning in SUNNI Islam today, Cairo's al-Azhar was founded in the tenth century as a center for SHI'Ī propaganda. After the AYYUBID conquest of Egypt in the late twelfth century, the Azhar was converted to a Sunni establishment, and, under the MAMLUKS, it became a major educational institution for the larger Islamic world. The Azhar remained a bastion of Arab culture after the OTTOMAN conquest of Egypt in the sixteenth century, and it struggled to recover the purity of Islam during the following centuries, which witnessed the rise of colonialism and world hegemony by non-Muslim nations. In the twentieth century the Azhar has continued to inculcate conservative Islamic values while resisting secular encroachments in government and society.

BARAKAH. A God-given blessing, sanctity, or spiritual power that may be manifest in KARĀMAT, or "miracles."

CITADEL. The fortress, palaces, and other structures located at the edge of the Muqāṭṭam hills overlooking Cairo, which served as the official residence for Egyptian regimes beginning with the AYYUBIDS and including the MAMLUKS, OTTOMANS, and Muhammad 'Alī.

- DHIKR.** "Remembering" God; a major SUFI ritual for inner purification and divine blessings. This ritual has a variety of forms and specific procedures, but most of them involve the repetition by an individual or a group, of divine names (e.g., Allah; He) or religious formulas (e.g., "There is no god but God!").
- DĪWĀN.** A collection of poetry by a single author.
- FĀRID.** A women's advocate who draws up the legal shares on their behalf in matters such as inheritance, abandonment, and divorce.
- FUṢṬĀṬ.** The original garrison "camp" founded by the conquering Muslim armies in 640 C.E., the city became a suburb of Cairo after the latter's creation in 969 C.E.
- ḤADĪTH.** A report of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings or actions—his SUNNAH, or "custom." The collected, traditionally reliable reports have been second only to the Qur'ān as a source of law. In addition to the thousands of "prophetic" *ḥadīth* there are about a hundred "holy" *ḥadīth* (*al-ḥadīth al-qudsī*), which claim to relate God's words as told to Muhammad but are not included in the Qur'ān. Among these latter *ḥadīth* is the saying quoted earlier regarding God's declaration of war on the enemy of His WALLI, or "saint." Though a source for religious inspiration, these "holy" traditions may not be used in the five daily ritual prayers, and their authenticity has been questioned by many Muslims over the centuries.
- ḤADRAH.** A SUFI gathering or session for performing DHIKR and other rituals in the hopes of gaining the proximity and favor of God's "presence" or that of His prophet Muhammad.
- ḤANAFĪ.** A member of the first of four major SUNNI law schools, and the one named after Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767).
- ḤANBALĪ.** A member of the fourth and final major SUNNI law school, founded by the ḤADĪTH collector and conservative reformer Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855).
- AL-ḤIJĀZ.** The region of western Arabia along the Red Sea coast containing the two most holy cities in Islam, Mecca and Medina.
- ḤULŪL/ḤULŪLIYAH.** The "indwelling," or "incarnation," of God or divinity in a creature. Understandably associated with Christianity, incarnationist beliefs and doctrines have been considered a form of polytheism by most Muslims, both mystics and nonmystics alike.
- IJĀZAH.** An "authorization," or "license," certifying the right to teach and transmit a specific work (e.g., a DĪWĀN of poetry) or ritual technique (e.g., DHIKR, or religious singing; *see* MUNSHID).
- IMĀM.** Originally a "leader" of the daily ritual prayers, in SUNNI Islam the term is also applied to men of great religious expertise, such as the founders of the four major law schools. In Shī'ī Islam IMĀM

designates any of a handful of direct male descendants of Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law, 'Alī, who are often believed to have been infallibly guided by God and sinless.

ITTIHĀD/ITTIHĀDĪYAH. A frequent SUFĪ term for mystical union suggesting a "uniting" or "unification" of two or more things, whether substantially identical (e.g., water mixing with water) or different but indistinguishable (water in wine). Some Muslims have regarded belief in union between the divine and human as incarnationism (ḤULŪL/ḤULŪLIYAH) and, hence, polytheism. On the other hand, many Sufis have maintained that union is metaphorical; since only God truly exists, there is, in fact, no "uniting" (ITTIHĀD), only "unity," or "oneness" (WAḤDAH/TAWHĪD).

KARĀMAH/KARĀMĀT. A "grace" from God, often of a miraculous nature, demonstrating its recipient's special blessings (BARAKAH) and divine favor. Traditionally, such gifts are among the surest proofs of a WALĪ, or "saint."

KASHF. An "unveiling," or "revelation," of hidden truths indicating rare spiritual insight; gnosis.

KHĀNQĀH. A SUFĪ hostel or monastery. Often quite large and administering to the needs of itinerant mystics, a *khānqāh* was frequently under the control of a specific Sufi order (ṬARIQAH) for the teaching and transmission of its mystical doctrines, exercises, and rituals.

KHUSHDASH. Companions in slavery and manumission whose common experiences as MAMLUKS forged strong bonds of loyalty among themselves.

MĀLIKĪ. A member of the second of four major SUNNĪ law schools and the one founded by Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795).

MAMLUKS. A ruling dynasty of Egypt composed largely of mamluks, royal "slave" soldiers who succeeded their Ayyubid masters in 1250. Frequently of Kipchak Turkish and, later, Circassian origin, the dominant mamluks purchased their own slave soldiers and so perpetuated the mamluk system for centuries. While the Mamluk sultan usually had been a slave soldier, there were notable exceptions such as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 1293–94, 1298–1340), son of the sultan Qalā'ūn. Other sons of the Mamluks became scholars and members of the 'ULAMĀ', while daughters married among the upper social strata. The Mamluks were important to Egyptian and Islamic history both as great patrons of the arts and as defenders of the faith; the Mamluks time and again defeated the Mongol hordes, which had devastated other portions of the Muslim world. The Mamluk dynasty finally succumbed to the disciplined OTTOMAN armies in 1517, but Mamluk slave soldiers remained in positions of power and authority

until their final slaughter in 1811, by the Westernizing ruler Muhammad 'Alī (r. 1805–48).

MAWLID. A “saint’s day” to commemorate the birth and/or death of a WALĪ, or “saint.” Not surprisingly, the most celebrated *mawlid* is the *mawlid al-Nabī*, the “birthday” of the prophet Muhammad.

MONISM. A belief or doctrine that posits oneness, or unity, as the defining characteristic of reality. To account for the apparent multiplicity of existence, some monistic views conceive of all things as manifestations or reflections of a single, necessary God—like the sun and its rays or its reflection in the moon. Similarly, other monistic systems perceive things as various forms of a single substance—like different objects with different purposes but all made of gold. (See ITTIHĀD and WAḤDAT AL-WUJŪD).

MUḤAMMAD. According to Islamic tradition, the final prophet sent by God to guide humanity to the straight path and to warn humans of the impending judgment day. Muhammad’s revelations began around 610 C.E. and continued until his death in 11/632. These revelations were collected into the Qur’ān while Muhammad’s personal sayings and actions, his “custom” (SUNNAH), were collected and codified in ḤADĪTH.

MUNSHID. A “singer” of religious songs and poetry and often the featured event of DHIKR and SAMĀ’ sessions. To become recognized singers, individuals must undergo a rigorous training to earn certification (IJĀZAH) in various SUFĪ doctrines, genres of poetry, and ritual and performative techniques.

NAFS. The “concupiscence,” or “animal soul,” which each individual must tame in order to lead a God-fearing and pure life free of selfishness.

OTTOMANS. The Turkish dynasty named for a frontier warrior, Osman (=Ottoman), who carved out an amirate in Anatolia at the end of the fourteenth century. The Ottomans steadily expanded their empire into the Middle East and Eastern Europe, taking Constantinople in 1453. Ruling from this capital, renamed Istanbul, the Ottoman sultans led their superior armies on annual campaigns, and in 1517 Selim I (r. 1512–20) defeated the MAMLUKS and relegated Egypt to an Ottoman province. While the Ottomans continued to enjoy success, especially during the reign of Sulaymān the Magnificent (r. 1520–66), their Egyptian province was ruled by a succession of governors who organized the remaining Mamluks into a kind of feudal order. As the Ottoman expansionist economy slowed with dwindling opportunities for new and substantial conquests, local power groups, such as the Qāzdughlī Mamluks in Egypt, asserted

their autonomy from Istanbul, and the Ottoman dynasty fell into a long spiral of administrative and economic decline. In the nineteenth century the Ottomans continued to lose ground to European colonial powers and to Muhammad 'Alī (r. 1805–48), the ruler of Egypt. The Ottoman sultanate was officially abolished by Atatürk in 1921.

QĀḌĪ. A “judge” and legal arbiter in personal disputes, appointed by the state and, in the **ĀYYUBID**, **MAMLUK**, and **OTTOMAN** empires, a member of one of the four major **SUNNĪ** law schools.

QĀḌĪ AL-QUDĀT. The “judge of Judges,” or chief justice.

QAṢĪDAH. The formal “ode” and major poetic form of classical Arabic literature.

AL-QUR'ĀN. The “recitation,” or revelations, brought by Muhammad to humanity between 610–32 C.E., and the Muslim holy scripture. The Qur'ān claims to be the inimitable word of God, revealed in a clear Arabic language; it consists of 114 chapters of varying lengths from 3 to 286 verses.

RĀWĪ. A “transmitter” of verse by one or more poets. An individual became a certified *rāwī* by memorizing and accurately reciting the verse by designated master poets.

SAMĀ'. The “audition” of scripture, verse, or song for the purpose of attaining ecstasy or proximity to the divine. A controversial practice, the Sufi orders (**ṬARIQAH**) developed specific rules and rituals for their **SAMĀ'** sessions, which frequently revolved around a performance by professional singers (**MUNSHID**).

SHĀFI'Ī. A member of the third of four major **SUNNĪ** law schools and the one founded by the legal systematizer Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/819).

SHAYKH. A general title of respect for a tribal chief or an elderly religious man; in a Sufi order (**ṬARIQAH**), a shaykh is a spiritual guide and, often, head of the order. In **MAMLUK** sources the title may also refer to a holder of certain paid positions in religious and academic institutions.

SHAYKH AL-ISLĀM. A title held by the chief justice, the **QĀḌĪ AL-QUDĀT**, in the **MAMLUK** empire.

SHAYKH AL-SHUYUKH. The “shaykh of shaykhs” was originally a title of respect for the head of the prestigious first **KHĀNQĀH** in Cairo, the Sa'īd al-Su'adā', or al-Ṣalāḥīyah; later the title was given to the rectors of other **SUFĪ** establishments as well.

SHI'AH. Originally the “party” supporting the political claims of Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, to be caliph (r. 35–40/656–61). Following 'Alī's death in 40/661, allegiance was transferred to his sons and, subsequently, to various of their direct male descendants who the **SHI'AH** recognized as the only legitimate

leaders (IMĀMS) of the Muslim community. ‘Alī and the other *imāms* also came to be venerated by most SHI‘AH as infallible and sinless religious figures believed to possess a secret spiritual wisdom entrusted to them by the prophet Muhammad shortly before his death.

SHI‘I. An adherent of a SHI‘AH interpretation of Islam.

ŞUFI. Meaning “one who wears wool,” this term was originally applied in the eighth century to Muslim ascetics. Subsequently, Sufi came to designate a Muslim mystic, an individual seeking a personal and experiential proximity to God. As in other religions, mystics in Islam often have been members of the religious elite (‘ULAMĀ’), and Sufis have developed their own doctrines, orders (TARIQAHS), and rituals, such as DHIKR and SAMĀ‘, to help them in their spiritual quests. In addition, by the fifteenth century the term *Sufi* appears in Mamluk endowment deeds as an occupational category for paid positions involving instruction in Sufism and the performance of Sufi rituals, whose blessings were to be conferred on the benefactor.

SUNNAH. The “custom” of the prophet Muhammad, preserved and transmitted in collected traditions, or HADĪTH.

SUNNĪ. A follower of the teachings and “custom” of the prophet Muhammad; Sunnis have constituted the vast majority of Muslims over the centuries. By contrast, a SHI‘I follows, in addition to Muhammad’s custom, the teachings, sayings, and customs of the recognized IMĀMS.

TA’WIL. The metaphorical “interpretation” of scripture or verse.

TARIQAḤ (pl. ṬURUQ). A SUFI “path,” or “way,” usually designating an organized mystical order with its own specific teachings, discipline, and rituals, especially DHIKR. There are over twenty major orders with hundreds of branches.

THEOSOPHY. A philosophy or religious system claimed to be based largely on direct spiritual contact with a divine reality.

‘ULAMĀ’. A collective term for Islamic religious experts, “those who know” the Qur’ān, *ḥadīth*, and divine law. Originally a group of pious Muslims knowledgeable in these sources, the ‘*ulamā*’ soon became professionals specializing in a wide variety of areas including Qur’ānic exegesis, *ḥadīth*, theology, and mysticism, though their core curriculum has remained law and jurisprudence. While members of the ‘*ulamā*’ have opposed tyrannical or secularizing regimes, the religious establishment has been heavily dependent on state support and patronage.

WAḤDAT AL-WUJŪD. “Unity of being,” the name given to Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabi’s (d. 637/1240) abstruse teachings on reality and the mystical quest for gnosis. His nondualistic theosophy posits that all

existence is the outward appearance of one true and necessary being and, thus, things have only relative, not absolute, existence. Once this truth is grasped one will find real oneness (TAWHĪD/WAḤDAH/ITTIHĀD).

WALĪ (pl. AWLIYĀ'). A "protector" or "protected friend," the term most frequently used in Islam to designate God's elect, or "saints," whom He has graced with blessings (BARAKAH) manifest in miracles (KAR-ĀMĀT) and to whom He has granted the right of intercession with Him on the behalf of others.

WAQT (pl. AWQĀT). A "moment" of mystical ecstasy or religious inspiration; the "eternal now."

WUJŪDĪ. An adherent of the THEOSOPHICAL, often MONISTIC, doctrines of WAḤDAT AL-WUJŪD.

ZĀWIYAH. A hostel or meeting place for SUFIS, normally of modest size and endowment and frequently associated with a specific Sufi order, or ṬARĪQAH.

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